MEN AND WOMEN

OF FRANCE,

DURING THE LAST CENTURY.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1852.

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THE SECOND VOLUME.

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XL.H.23

MEN AND WOMEN

OF

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

BOUCHER.

In the history of painting in France, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we find two schools, or rather two families of painters, springing up almost simultaneously, and holding alternate sway. The one, grand and forcible, drawing the sources of its life from the glorious inspiration of Nature, which still adorns human beauty with memorials of heaven, and with the splendour of the ideal; the other graceful and worldly, which does not look for inspiration, which contents itself with being pretty, with smiling, and even charming at the expense of truth and grandeur. The object of its search is not the pure and simple beauty which is radiant with the sentiment of divinity, it seeks only to attract. The first exhibits Art in all her splendour, the second is but the falsehood of Art. In the seventeenth century Poussin and Mignard were at the head of these two

families of art, as I have called them. The one has the beauty of force and simplicity, the other that of grace and cleverness. This striking contrast was reproduced, in a feebler form, in the eighteenth century, by the Vanloos and Bouchers. The Vanloos, though they did not await the hour of inspiration, though they could not rise high enough to grasp the supreme beauty, set out with the noble ardour of Poussin, and reached only theatrical display; they stopped half way in their journey, but they at least preserved a remembrance of their point of departure. When the power was at fault, the aim saved the work. We cannot forget those natural artists who brought from Flanders the freshness of their fields. Despite their noble efforts serious art soon expired, overcome by the profane school of Watteau. Watteau, who reigned during the regency, gave, so to speak, the colour to his time. The painter, however, who most faithfully represents art in the eighteenth century is Boucher. It is curious to study in Boucher the caprice which holds sovereign sway, without reverence for the past and without regard for the future. Boucher, whatever may be the contempt of some or the pity of others, will always hold a place in the history of Art. We cannot reject this painter, who reigned for forty years, overwhelmed with fame and fortune—this painter, protesting in his unrestrained freedom against the recognised masters, opening a school fatal to all that is noble, grand, and beautiful, and yet not devoid

of a certain grace, a certain magic of colour, and, finally, a certain charm of expression before unknown. David, who was his pupil, always recalls, amid his statuesque Romans, the smiling faces of Boucher. Girodet himself, who sought for grandeur and sentiment in simplicity, never disdained this painter. He solicitously collected all his designs, he lingered over them as over the recollections of the wildness of youth. "We have grown old while surrounded by this graceful exhibition of court shepherdesses. Shall we be able to recover ourselves again? These are faithless mistresses, long forgotten, who again present themselves to us when we are wearied and seek a change." It is esteemed good taste to condemn Boucher; we thus gain the credit of being good and moral judges, but the honest critic will recognise Boucher as the historian does Louis XV.

Mignard was the first in France to allow himself to be seduced by the false attractions of that worldly grace which proscribes art. Art only admits the deception which is styled the ideal; that is to say, all that ennobles, elevates, and poetizes the truth. Having to take the portraits of the ladies of the court, Mignard did not paint them as they were, but as they wished to be. Hence those smiles not of earth which enchant us, hence those looks raised to heaven, but still moist with pleasure. We understand how he became the most admired of all portrait-painters; he was false to truth, everybody knew it, his models as

well as himself; but no one was so ill-advised as to reproach him for his gallantry. There was not one of his duchesses who did not proclaim her likeness a striking one. The false painters are the painters of women. He thus not only amassed a splendid fortune, but formed a school, an alluring and dangerous school, which became extinct only through its abuse of falsehood. Watteau followed the steps of Mignard, but with a more piquant and delicate charm. Mignard had spoiled or adorned, whichever you please, the great ladies of the court; Watteau took up the actresses, the citizens' families, the peasant-girls. It would be impossible to say how many charming and gay masquerade scenes he has painted in the wantonness of art. Another falsifier appeared, Lemoine by name; he perpetrated more serious falsehoods of a mythological character. His most serious and most remarkable production was Francis Boucher, his pupil, the falsifier *par excellence*, the most faithful portrait of his time.

Lemoine had studied more especially in the school of Rubens. Like that great master he had sacrificed correctness of drawing to splendour of colour. The ceiling of the Chapel of the Virgin, and the Saloon of Hercules, at Versailles, form his principal works. Certainly, judging by these, he was an artist not devoid of force and grace. He, however, at once plunged into bad taste, in seeking richness rather than force, magical effect rather than beauty.

Lafosse, Jouvenet, Lemoine, Coypel, and De Troy were then masters of the prevailing school. Watteau, who in truth was more of an artist than all of them put together, passed in their eyes merely for a decorative painter of the Opera. He was, however, more truthful in his charming falsehoods than all those masters who got hold of truth by the wrong end. Since the death of Lesueur France had been waiting for a great painter. Lebrun had attracted the attention which was turned aside from Poussin and Lesueur, whose sublime power was not recognised. Study in art was conducted as chance determined, sometimes at Rome after Carlo Maratti and Albano, who were taken for great painters, sometimes at Paris after Lebrun and Mignard, who were thought greater than Poussin and Lesueur. In 1750, prior to the critiques of Diderot, the Marquis d'Argens, who was a man of talent, declared, judging according to the prevailing opinions of his day, that Mignard equalled Correggio, Lebrun Michael Angelo, and Lemoine Rubens.

After the death of Mignard and Lebrun, Lemoine took the first place; he was more worthy of it than the De Troys and the Coypels. He was the only one who left a pupil of recognised ability, Francis Boucher, of whom the Marquis d'Argens thus speaks: "A universal genius, who unites in himself the talents of Veronese and of Gaspar, copying from Nature her most charming grace."

Boucher was born at the same time that Bossuet

died. Some few vestiges only of the great reign were left. Fontenelle alone (that presentiment of the eighteenth century) was standing, in the proportions of a dwarf, on the tombs of Corneille, of Poussin, of Molière, of Lesueur, and of La Fontaine.[a] France was exhausted by her magnificent births. Who, however, would believe that Boucher was one of the most forcible expressions of an entire century? But really, was not the eighteenth century, for fifty years, like Boucher, full of folly, treating everything with a laugh, passing from caprice to scoffing, delighting itself in petty deceits, replacing art by artifice, living from day to day without memory, without hope, disdaining force for grace, dazzling others as well as itself by his factitious colours? When poetry and taste so readily went astray, with the Abbé de Voisenon and Gentil-Bernard, who will be surprised that painting should have trifled with the pencil of Boucher?

We see at the first glance at one of his pictures that he dwelt among stones, and not in the fields. He never took time to look at either the sky or a river, a meadow or a forest; it might even be doubted whether he ever saw a man but through a prism, or whether he ever saw a woman or child such as God made them. Boucher painted a new world, the world of fairies, where every one is moved, every one loves and smiles after a fashion quite different from that of this world. He is an enchanter who distracts and

dazzles us at the expense of reason, taste, and art; he reminds us somewhat of this line of Bernis, a poet worthy such a painter:—

> By dint of Art, Art's self is banished.

There had been painters before of the name and family of Boucher; one among others who left some wonderful designs in red chalk of mythological subjects. He was Mignard's master; Mignard gave lessons to Lemoine, Lemoine to Boucher; so that the painter was enabled thus to receive traditionally lessons from his great-grandfather. Unfortunately he had the perversity to receive nothing from tradition but the falsities of Mignard and Lemoine.

Boucher never possessed the enthusiasm of an earnest artist. He became a painter as unceremoniously as he would have made himself a journalist. It was during those fine times when Voisenon turned priest while writing operas. Every one wanted faith, in the arts, in literature, at the foot of the altar, even on the throne. Did Louis XV. himself believe in royalty? But how can we find fault with Boucher? Would he not have been overwhelmed with ridicule if he had been an artist in all seriousness, studying with patience, growing pale with aspirations after greatness? He preferred being of his age, of his day and generation. He commenced like a youth, throwing to the first wind that blew all the roses of his

twenty years. He had two studios; one was that of Lemoine, the other, and principal one, was the opera. Was not that Boucher's true theatre? Was it not at the opera that he found his landscapes and his portraits? Opera-landscapes, opera-personages, form pretty much the whole of Boucher! The two studios formed a singular contrast; in the first was Lemoine, grave, sad, devoured with pride and envy, discontented with everything, with his pupils and himself; in the second was the whole laughing retinue of human follies —gold and silk, wit and pleasure, the lips smiling, and the silken garment fluttering in the breeze. It was in those fine times when Camargo found that her skirts were too long for the dance. In order to get a nearer view of all these wonders, Boucher asked the favour of painting a decoration. He picked up the sparkling pencil of Watteau, to paint in bold outline the nymphs and naiads. Carl Vanloo joined him; in a little while they made themselves masters of all the decorations and the *espaliers* (such was the appellation of the figurantes of the time).

There was then flourishing in society, and out of it, a circle of wits, such as the Count de Caylus, Duclos, Pont-de-Veyle, Maurepas, Montcrif; Voisenon, and Crébillon the Gay, Collé, and certain prodigal sons of good citizens, had the entrée, thanks to their wit or their gaiety. They wrote couplets on all sorts of things, and tirades in the form of a gazette, which circulated about the court and city; burlesque scenes,

which were played in the saloons and in the open air; licentious stories, which passed from mouth to mouth, like the last bit of current news. It was the literature of the opera. Boucher was therefore received with favour into the society of *these gentlemen*, for such was the name they took. At a later day, D'Alembert delivered a somewhat severe judgment on the works of *these gentlemen*, by calling their joint productions "a drunken surfeit rather than a gay debauch of wit." Duclos, the representative of this academy of bad taste, was thus portrayed by Madame de Rochfort; she is referring to the passions of the heart: she is speaking of that paradise which each one made for himself in this world, according to his own notion: "As for you, Duclos, the material for yours, is the first object that attracts you." This portrait may be taken for Boucher, and for all the members of that circle.

In lieu of following, step by step, a biography, embroidered everywhere with adventures of gallantry, I prefer to relate an adventure which displays Boucher, at the best period of his life, seeking for art and love in truth, fleeing from them as soon as found, to fall again still deeper into falsehoods of art and of love. No! I will not recount to you all Boucher's follies at the opera; those bursts of licentious gaiety, in which the heart had no part. It is a worn-out theme: all the writers of memoirs have trudged over the road, which is a sufficient reason for my turning from it.

Of what use is it, besides, to evoke the shades of those amours without house or home, faith or law, which shoot forth only blunted arrows? Let us, therefore, follow Boucher during those rare moments when his heart was in play, when his talent became almost severe. It is good to be young and to laugh, but what is there more sad than a man who is always laaghing?

Boucher soon became disgusted with the opera; with those sham pictures which he produced, as if by magic, to decorate the *Castor and Pollux* of Rameau and Gentil-Bernard; with the sham love, in which he culled faded roses without thorns; he did not know the value of the thorn which guards a rose! those sham paintings and sham loves had bewildered, dazzled, and enchanted him, as long as the white hand of youth scattered primroses along his path. The most luxuriant and most prodigal youth, however, is that which is the soonest exhausted. Boucher awoke one morning, sad and disenchanted, without knowing why. He at last understood that he had until then profaned his heart and art, and that he had thus lost all the glorious morn of life. He still raised his head with some remnant of natural pride. "It is always time to do well," said he one morning to his master, whose lessons he attended only at distant intervals. He made a studio of his boudoir; he retouched all the gallant sketches that he had hanging on all sides. *Love the Bird-Catcher, Love the Reaper, Love the Vine-dresser;*

you can imagine the whole of that gay and sparkling poem, where Love has no time for sighing. He closed his Mythology, which he had consulted a thousand times; he bought a Bible, but though he had read the Mythology with fervour, he could scarce summon energy to turn over the leaves of the Bible, and cast here and there a careless glance. Unfortunately for him, he had the Mythology by heart: Loves concealed the angels, the nymphs of Venus, the seraphs of Paradise. He was not however discouraged at the first attempt. He persisted in turning over the Book of books; he saw Rachel at the well; ill-fated man, he was reminded of Venus at the bath. He closed the Bible, saying to himself that to get the painted beauties of the opera out of one's head it was only needful to see some natural faces; but where to find them at that time, unless he should look for them in the cradle? Who knows? Labour is a wonderful preserver. Perhaps, by descending among the people, he might discover some angelic face, that the spirit, or rather the demon, of the age had left untouched,—a face worthy of conveying to him an idea of the majestic simplicity of the Bible. Boucher therefore sought inspiration in the open air, resolved to traverse the great city everywhere, resolved even to go, if necessary, to study in the open country, under the sun in the meadow, or in the shadow of some holy village church. For more than three weeks he lived by himself. He ended by freeing himself little by little, shred by shred, from the

deeply-impressed recollections of the opera. "What are you about?" the Count de Caylus asked him one day. "Doing penance," he replied, with an abstracted air.

The will is the sovereign mistress of the world. A man of good resolution can conquer everything; it is a rough virtue, an unhoped-for glory—it is genius itself, that endless ladder which Providence allows to descend at intervals to join earth to heaven, breaking it asunder when man mounts too quickly or too slowly. By a firm will — who would believe it?—Boucher threw a veil over his past life, broke the deceitful prisms which blinded him regarding this world, discovered another horizon, another source of light. A young girl in his neighbourhood, whom he had until then scarcely remarked, so frivolous and insipid had her sublime purity seemed to him, suddenly struck him as beaming with supreme beauty.

His studio, or rather boudoir, was in the Rue Richelieu. Not far from it, in the Rue St. Anne, he passed almost every day the shop of a fruiterer. He often saw a young girl on the door-step without being much struck by her, although she was beautiful, simple, and touching. Seduced by the studied graces of Camargo, could he be sensible of the charms of so gentle and chaste a beauty? One day, after three weeks of austere solitude, he stopped astonished before the fruit-shop. It was when cherries were in season. Baskets of the freshly-gathered fruit tempted the pass-

ers-by with their charming hues; a garniture of leaves half concealed the fruit which was not quite ripe. But it was not for the cherries that Boucher stopped. As he passed, the fruiterer's daughter, with bare arms and loosely flowing hair, was serving a neighbour. You should have seen her take the cherries in her delicate hand, put them, without any other measure, into the lap of her customer, and give a divine smile in return for the four sous she received in payment. The painter would have given four louis for the cherries, for the hand which served them, and, above all, for the divine smile. When the customer had gone, he advanced some steps without knowing what he was going to say. He was a perfect master in the art of gallantry. There was not a woman that he did not know how to attack on her weak side, face to face, sidewise, or by turning his back on her. He had been at a good school. He had long since said to himself, like Danton at a later period, "Courage, courage, always courage." He was right. Are you not sure of vanquishing a woman by treating her as an enemy? How happened it, however, that Boucher on that day lost all his force and courage at the sight of this simple and feeble young girl? Is it because strength is roused only by strength? The serpent who ruined Eve surprised her in her weakness, only because the spirit of evil did not yet understand women.

Boucher, who had advanced resolutely like a man

who is sure of his object, crossed the threshold of the fruiterer, all pale and trembling, and very much at a loss what to say. The young girl regarded him with so much serenity and calmness that he somewhat recovered his presence of mind. He asked for cherries, and, soon rallying himself, begged the young girl to allow him to sketch her beautiful face. She made no answer. The mother entered. As Boucher was a man of fine address, and the mother a coquette on the wane, he succeeded in obtaining her consent to take the portrait at his leisure. She brought her daughter the next day to the painter's studio. Boucher did not detain the mother. He made the daughter take her seat on a sofa, sharpened his pencil, and set to work with great joy.

Rosina possessed that description of beauty which is ignorant of its own attractions, which is rather pleasing than striking. Her regular profile called up pleasant recollections of the antique lines of beauty. She was a brunette, but her locks reflected in the light those beautiful golden tints which charmed Titian. Her eyes were of an undecided hue, like the sky during some autumn twilights; her mouth, somewhat large, perhaps, had a soft expression of candour, an expression which Rosina spoiled in speaking, said Boucher, "rather by her words than by the motion of her lips. Thus the sweetest hours which I passed with her were the most silent. I always liked what she was about to say, and scarcely ever what she did say."

The artist had been attracted before the man. Boucher had begun by seeing in her a lovely model; but, all engrossed as he was by his art, he soon ended by regarding Rosina only as a woman. His heart, which had never had time to love in the crowd of the more than profane passions of the opera, felt that it was not barren. The flowers of love sprang up under the flames of dissipation. Boucher became enamoured of Rosina, not like a man who makes a sport of love, but like a poet who loves with tears in his eyes: a tender love, pure and worthy of that heaven to which it rises, and whence it has descended. Rosina loved Boucher. How could she help loving him who gave her double assurance of her beauty, both by his lips and by his skill, for Rosina did not truly realise that she was beautiful until she beheld the head of the Virgin, which the poet had designed after that of the young girl? What was the result? You can guess. They loved one another: they told one another so. One day, after glances far too tender, the pencil fell from the artist's hand, the young girl cast her eyes down...."Ah! poor Rosina," exclaimed Diderot, meditating over the matter at a later period, "why were you not selling cherries on that day?"

The Virgin, which was to be the master-piece of Boucher, was not finished. The face was beautiful, but the painter had not yet been able to shed over it the divine sentiment which constitutes the charm of such a work. He hoped, he despaired, he meditated

and gazed at Rosina; in a word, he was at that fatal barrier, the barrier of genius, where all talent which is not genius must pause, and which, now and then, some who have the courage to make the attempt may perchance succeed in surmounting. His love for art, or for Rosina, had not been able to raise Boucher beyond this. His biblical feeling had not detached him from this lower world; while adoring the Virgin in Rosina, he also, profane man, adored a new mistress. His conversion was not sincere. He hesitated between the divine love which looks to the future, and the terrestrial love which regards the past; between that severe form of art which affects by its sublimity, and that pleasing form which charms by its grace. He had advanced thus far when a new personage appeared to change the current of his thoughts.

It was fifteen days since Rosina had commenced her sittings. It was but two since, at a glance from the young girl, the painter had dropped his pencil. It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, Boucher was preparing his palette, Rosina loosening her hair. There was a ring at the door of the studio. Rosina went and opened it, as if she had belonged to the house. "Monsieur Boucher?" inquired a young girl, who blushingly crossed the threshold. "What can I do for you?" said Boucher, glancing at the reflection of the young girl in a mirror. He approached to meet her. "Monsieur Boucher, I am a poor girl

without bread. If my mother was not sick and destitute of everything I could succeed in gaining a livelihood by my needle; but for the sake of my mother I have resigned myself to becoming a model. I have been told that I have a pretty hand and a passable face. Look, monsieur, do you think that I would do for a model?"

The stranger uttered all this with an air of vague anxiety; but what especially struck the painter while she was speaking was her coquettish and seductive beauty. Farewell to the Bible, farewell to Rosina, farewell to all simple and sublime love. The newcomer appeared to Boucher as the embodiment of all his previous reveries. It was this very Muse, less beautiful than pretty, less striking than graceful, that he had so ardently sought for. There was something in her face which belonged partly to heaven and partly to the opera, a trace of divinity such as might be found in a fallen angel, something which acts upon the heart and the lips at the same time: in fine, a certain something which I cannot describe, which charms and intoxicates, without elevating the soul to the splendours of lofty meditation. She was dressed as a poor girl, which contrasted somewhat with the delicacy of her features and movements. Boucher, although no bad physiognomist, did not discover any art or study in this beauty; she masked both by an air of lofty innocence. He allowed himself to be captivated. Who will be astonished at it who recollects

that he fancied that he had found nature in the studio of Lamoine or at the opera? Rosina was his first serious lesson—it was Nature in all her true and simple majesty. But the instincts of the painter, deceptive and vitiated, could not rise to its height. On beholding the face of the stranger he seemed to see the face of an acquaintance, a face which he had seen in another country, or in another world. He, therefore, notwithstanding her mean attire, received her as a friend "How, mademoiselle," said he to her, with an admiring look; "you say that you are tolerably beautiful? Say, rather, intensely."—"Not at all," said she, with the sweetest smile in the world. "Really, mademoiselle, you have come most opportunely. I was in search of a beautiful expression for the head of the Virgin; perhaps I shall find it in yours. Incline your head a little on your bosom. Put your hand on this arm-chair. Rosina, draw aside the red curtain."

Boucher did not notice the tearful glance cast on him by the young girl. She silently obeyed, while she asked herself if she was no longer fit for anything but to draw the curtain. She went and sat down in a corner of the studio, to observe at her ease, and without being seen, her who had come to disturb her happiness. But scarce was she seated on the divan, when Boucher, who liked solitude to consist of two, recommended her to return to her mother, at the same time enjoining upon her to come early the next day. She went without saying a word, with death at her heart,

foreseeing that she would be forgotten for her who remained tête-à-tête with her lover. She dried her tears at the foot of the staircase. "Alas! what will my mother say when she sees me so sad?" She walked about the streets to give her sadness time to disappear. "Besides," she continued, "by waiting a little I shall see her come out. I shall be able to discover what is passing in her heart."

She waited. More than an hour passed away. The model was sitting in good earnest. Boucher spoiled his beautiful Virgin, to the fulness of his bent, by endeavouring to unite in it two styles of character. The stranger at last came out with an embarrassed air, as if she had committed a bad action. It had rained in the morning, and the street was almost impracticable for pretty feet. She slipped along as light as a cat in the direction of the Palais Royal. She stopped at a house of poor appearance, gave a crown to the porter, cast her eyes about her suspiciously, and disappeared within the portal. Rosina had followed her. On seeing her disappear, she examined the house, and, not daring to push her curiosity any further, resolved also to return home. An invisible hand, however, retained her in spite of herself. She must needs spy at all the windows of the house. She had a presentiment that she should see the unknown one again. All of a sudden, to her great surprise, she fancied that she recognised her in some one who was going out in an

was dressed as a fine lady, in a taffeta robe, with a train, the end of which she strove to thrust into her pocket, a mantilla, red heels, all the accessories. "Where can she be going in that dress?" Rosina asked herself, as she followed her almost step by step. The lady went straight to a gilded carriage, which was waiting for her before the Palais Royal. A lacquey rushed before her to open the door. She quickly stepped into the carriage with the air of one accustomed to do so every day. "I suspected it," muttered Rosina; "there was an indescribable something in her manner, her mode of speech, the softened pride of her glance, which surprised me. There is no use for her to assume all sorts of masks, she will be found out in the end. Alas! I wonder if he found her out!"

The next day Rosina, purposely, came a little late. He did not utter, however, on seeing her, that sweet phrase which consoles the absent for absence, whether from hearth or heart, "I was waiting for you."—"Well," said she, after a pause, "you say nothing to me about your fine lady."—"My fine lady! I do not understand."—"So you did not find her out? She was not a poor girl, as she said, but a fine lady who has not much to do. I saw her get into her carriage. Oh! such a carriage, such horses, such a footman!"—"What do you say? You are trying to deceive me: it is a falsehood."—"It is the truth. Now do you believe in those fine airs of innocence?"—"What a singular adventure!" said Boucher, passing

his hand over his forehead: "will she come back?" At this moment Rosina went and rested her joined hands on the painter's shoulder. "She did not ask you for anything?" said she, with a mournful, but charming expression Boucher kissed the forehead of his mistress as it was bent over him. "Nothing, except a crown as the price of the sitting: it is an enigma: I cannot make it out."—"Alas, she will return."—"Who knows? she was to do so this morning."—"I shall take good care to-day not to open the door."—"Why not? what folly! Are you beginning to be jealous?"—"You are very cruel! Will *you* open the door yourself?"—"Yes." Rosina drew back with a sigh. "Then," said she, with tears in her eyes, "the door shall close on me."

Rosina, weeping with love and jealousy, was of wondrous beauty; but Boucher, unfortunately for himself, thought only of the mysterious stranger. "Rosina, you don't know what you are saying; you are foolish." Boucher had spoken somewhat harshly: the poor girl went toward the door, and in a feeble voice murmured a sad farewell. She, doubtless, hoped that he would not let her go, that he would catch her in his arms, and console her with a kiss; but he did nothing of the kind: he forgot, the ingrate, that Rosina was not an opera-girl: he thought that she was *making believe*, like all the actresses, without heart or faith. Rosina did not make believe, she listened to her naïve and simple nature; she had given all that she could give, more than

her heart, than her soul; it was not surprising that she should revolt at being loved so lightly, as if by mere chance. She opened the door, turned toward Boucher; a single tender look would have brought her to his feet; he contented himself with saying to her, as he would to the first chance-comer, "Don't put on so many airs." These words made Rosina indignant. "It is all over!" said she. At the same moment she closed the door. The sound of her steps went to Boucher's heart. He would have rushed to the stairs, but he stopped himself with the idea that she would come back. Another would have done so, Rosina did not. With her Boucher lost all hope of real talent. He could not rise to her level. He set to work to search out the mysterious personage who so poetically personified his Muse.

In vain did he ransack the fashionable world, in company with Pont-de-Veyle and the Count de Caylus. He was at all the fêtes and amusements, at all the promenades and all the suppers; but he could not find her whom he sought with such infatuated ardour. Rosina was not completely banished from his mind; but the poor girl never appeared by herself in his reminiscences—he always beheld her image by the side of that of the unknown lady. One day, however, as he was looking at his unfinished *Virgin,* he felt that Rosina was still in his heart. He reproached himself for having abandoned her. He resolved to go forth-

with and tell her that he loved and always had loved her. He went down stairs, and turned towards the Rue St. Anne, making his way through a crowd of carriages and hacks. A young girl passed along the other side of the street, with a basket in her hand. He recognised Rosina. Alas! it was but the shadow of Rosina: grief had made sad havoc with her charms; desertion had crushed her with its icy hand. He was about crossing the street to join her, when a carriage passing prevented his doing so. A woman put her head out of the window. "It is she!" he exclaimed, completely overcome. He forgot Rosina, and followed the carriage, ready for whatever might happen. The carriage led him to a mansion in the Rue St. Dominique. The painter boldly presented himself half an hour afterwards. He was received by the husband with every mark of attention. "I think, Monsieur le Comte, that I have heard it said that Madame would not disdain to have her portrait taken by my pencil." "She has not said a word about it to me; but I will conduct you to her oratory." Bold as he was, Boucher almost wished himself home again; but as it was as embarrassing to beat a retreat, without any apparent reason, as to face the danger, he suffered himself to be led to the oratory.

It was her, the poor girl without bread. She told Boucher that curiosity, combined with a little ennui, had led her to his studio, to obtain an opinion on her

beauty, once for all, by a competent judge, who would have no reason for telling an untruth. "I once paid you for a sitting," said Boucher, passionately; "it is now your turn to pay me for one." It was decided that he should take the Countess's portrait. It was never brought to completion—so much delight did Boucher take in his task.

After the intoxication of this passion had abated, the young girl whom he had forsaken returned to Boucher's mind. On looking at his *Virgin*, in which the profane artist had mingled his impressions of the two beauties, he saw clearly that Rosina was the most beautiful. The Countess had enticed him with the greatest power, but the charm was dispelled. He again discovered that Rosina possessed that ideal beauty which ravishes lovers and gives genius to painters. "Yes," said he, regretfully, "I deceived myself like a child! The real and human beauty, the true light, the heavenly sentiment, belonged to Rosina; the seductiveness, the falsehood, that expression which comes neither from the heart nor from Heaven, the Countess possessed. I spoilt my *Virgin*, like a fool; but there is still time." There was not! He ran to the fruiterer's; he asked for Rosina. "She is dead," said her mother to him. "Dead!" exclaimed Boucher, pale with despair. "Yes, Monsieur Artist: she died, as those who die at sixteen, of love. I only speak from hearsay; but she acknowledged to an aunt, who watched by her in her last moments, that she was dying of a broken heart

from having loved too much! By the way, you forgot to take my portrait. Hers, too! I have not thought any more about it." "It is not finished," said the painter, gasping for breath.

Returning to his studio, he abandoned himself to grief; he threw himself on his knees before the unfinished *Virgin*; he cursed the fatal passion which had drawn him away from Rosina; he swore to devote himself thenceforth to the holy memory of this sister of the angels. After having mourned for an hour, he was seized, as by a sudden inspiration, with a desire to retouch his figure of the *Virgin*. "No, no!" exclaimed he, vehemently. "In effacing what I owe to the Countess, shall I not also destroy this divine trace of my poor Rosina?" He removed the canvas from the easel, bore it with a trembling hand to the other end of the studio, and hung it over the sofa on which Rosina had seated herself for the last time in his sight. He did not confide his grief to more than three or four friends, such as the Count de Caylus, Pont-de-Veyle, and Duclos. Whenever the unfinished *Virgin* was noticed in his room, he contented himself with saying, "Do not speak to me of that, for you will remind me that my time for genius has passed."

In those fine times, no one, unless it was a Rosina, died of grief. They consoled themselves for everything; Boucher consoled himself. He threw himself with still greater recklessness into all the follies of a worldly life. He had turned his back on a woman

such as Nature created: he did the same to the landscape that expanded beneath the sun. Boucher dispensed with Nature altogether. One day, when in a rational mood (it was but a deceptive glimmer), he left Paris for the first time since his childhood. Where did he go? He has not said; but, according to a letter written to Lancret, he found Nature very disagreeable —too green, badly managed as to light! Is it not amusing to see an artist of Boucher's calibre finding fault with the work of the Great Artist of light and colour? Raphael and Michael Angelo were well avenged in advance; for, as you will see directly, Boucher was not at the end of his criticisms. What is still more amusing, Lancret answered Boucher thus: "I agree with you. Nature is wanting in harmony and attractiveness." I can fancy to myself Boucher in the midst of a fine, but somewhat wild country, trying to understand, but understanding nothing of the great spectacle; hearing nothing of all those hymns of love which Nature raises to Heaven, in the voice of rivers, of forests, of birds, and of humanity; seeing nought of that divine harmony in which are blended the hand of God and the hand of man—the hand which creates and the hand which labours. In the midst of all these marvels, Boucher kept on his way, like an exile who treads a foreign land. He sought his gods:—"Where is Pan? Where is Narcissus? Where is Diana, the huntress?" He called; none answered, not even Echo. He sought for those mortals

who were familiar to him; but where were those pretty and gallant *fêtes champêtres* to be found? He could not even find a shepherdess in the meadow. He was doubtless overcome with joy on re-entering his studio, to return to his pretty rosy landscapes, over which were spread the enchantments of fairy-land. He was surnamed the painter of fairies with good cause; for he lived, loved, and painted only in the world of fairies.

After these two decisive checks, Boucher abandoned himself more than ever to the frolicsome and mannered grace habitual to him. His studio again became a boudoir, much haunted by actresses. He was not twenty-six, but was everywhere in demand, at first on account of his talents, afterward for his pleasant manners. The Academicians alone rejected him, because he had the haughty bearing of a gentleman, and because he laughed somewhat at their gravity; perhaps, also, because he ridiculed art a little. But who were then the Academicians? Had they the right, except it was Jean Baptiste Vanloo and Boulogne, to reject Boucher? In the eyes of all reasonable judges, he gained the Roman prize. However, the Academy did not so decide. Nevertheless, he set out for Rome: the third and last attempt to find art and nature; but he put the Academy in the right, for he wasted his time in the City of the Arts. He pronounced Raphael insipid, and Michael Angelo an artist of deformity! Forgive him for his profanity or his blindness! Criti-

cism on Nature might pass; but on Raphael! on Michael Angelo!

Boucher had left for Rome with Carle Vanloo: he returned alone, without money or studies, denying the merit of all the masterpieces. What could one then augur of such a painter? He was not, however, despaired of. "His talent has ruined him, his talent will save him," said the Count de Caylus—a just and profound remark which well describes Boucher's talent. In proof of this, he was scarcely back again when he became all the fashion: he had only to paint to gain applause. All the great mansions, all the splendid country seats were thrown open to his graceful talents. He worked day and night, amusing himself at the expense of everybody, including himself, producing, as by magic, Venuses in angelic choirs and angels equipped with arrows. He had no time to be very particular. He went on and on as rapid as the wind, finishing on the same day a *Visitation* for St. Germain des Près, a *Venus at Cythera* for Versailles, a design for an opera scene, a portrait of a duchess, and a painting of scandalous design; by turns inspired by heaven and hell, no longer believing in glory, giving himself up, body and soul, to making a fortune. During the remainder of his life he made every year not less than fifty thousand livres, equivalent to a hundred thousand at the present day. He lived in grand style; he lived beyond his income; he affected the philosophy of the time; he ridiculed all that was noble and grand; he doubted

religion, and all that comes to us from it—the virtue of the heart, the aspirations of the soul. He gave regal fêtes: one among others which cost him a year's work, a celebrated festival, called the festival of the gods. His design was to represent Olympus, and all the pagan divinities. He himself was Jupiter; his mistress, disguised as Hebe—that is to say, in very scanty garments—passed the night in serving ambrosia to all these counterfeit gods and goddesses. The Academicians, astounded at these achievements, determined upon admitting Boucher, the noisy fame of whose school had thrown the Academy into the shade. Boucher was no more of an Academician after he had the title than before. He continued to live as a prodigal, and paint as an artist without faith.

He did not content himself with painting, but engraved and modelled also; he engraved a large number of Watteau's designs; he modelled, on a small scale, groups and dancing-girls for the manufactory at Sèvres. His engravings and modellings are worthy of his best pictures; they possess the same grace, the same spirit, and the same smile. By thus multiplying himself, Boucher extended his reputation everywhere; you might see at the same time his plump *Cupids* on mantel-pieces, his *Nymphs* on watches, his engravings in books, his pictures on all the walls. As Boucher did not sell his works at high prices, he owed his large income to his prodigious facility. Madame Geoffrin bought two of his prettiest pictures for the sum of two

thousand crowns, and they were not his worst-paid pictures. The Empress of Russia bought them from Madame Geoffrin for thirty thousand livres. Madame Geoffrin went as fast as she could after Boucher, and said to him, "I have often told you that pictures bear high interest in my hands; here are twenty-four thousand livres which accrue to you for your *Aurora* and *Thetis*."—It was not the first time that good Madame Geoffrin had engaged in this kind of trade. She had begun it with Carle Vanloo.

Soon after his return from Rome he fell in love with a young girl of a citizen family, one of the most beautiful women in France—perhaps the most beautiful. Her portrait is at Versailles; Raoux has represented her as a *Vestal*. You may see her, feeding the sacred flame—the sacred flame of whom? Not of Boucher or of herself; for, if there is flame anywhere in the picture, it is in the Vestal's glances. Boucher was so desperately in love with her, that, despairing of obtaining what he wanted in any other manner, he resigned himself to submit to marriage, although, as he facetiously remarked, "marriage was not habitual with him." Having become his wife, she often sat for his *Virgins* and *Venuses*; you may recognise her here and there in Boucher's works. What, however, was more worthy of him and of herself was that she presented him with two charming daughters, who appear to have modelled themselves after the most

blooming and beautiful of the painter's forms. She died at twenty-four, "too beautiful," said the inconsolable Boucher, "to live long in the atmosphere of Paris."

Less than seventeen years after his marriage, Boucher married his daughters to two painters, who were not of his school, Deshays, who almost possessed genius, and Baudouin, who would have been the La Fontaine of painting if he had relied entirely on simplicity. Madame Boucher and her two daughters passed their lives amid the splendours of the world and amid tears. Charming and beautiful as they were, they often found themselves neglected for opera-girls, or other chance-comers. Boucher, Deshays, and Baudouin had tasted the bitter grapes of evil passion. They were but momentarily sensible of the grace and virtue of a wife; the chaste fragrance of the household fireside could not charm their hearts; a more exciting intoxication was needful to these abandoned souls, a cup less pure for their polluted lips. They all three died about the same time, within the space of a year—the youngest first, Boucher the last, after having been a witness to the despair of his companions. Deshays was, perhaps, the only great painter after Lesueur. He had, in 1750, a feeling for beauty and grandeur. Accordingly, Boucher, who was a man of good sense sometimes, seeing such a pupil in his studio, took good care not to give him instruction.

He contented himself with giving him his daughter, saying humorously, "Study with her." As for Baudouin, he was Greuze and Boucher in miniature; or, according to Diderot, "a jumble of Fontenelle and Theocritus."

Boucher, therefore, pursued his career in the same fatal direction in which he had lost himself while following his master's path. In spite of the money he made, and the vainglory which each day brought him, he was never happy, he never enjoyed the consciousness of possessing heart or talent. He was but too conscious of his faults as a man and as a painter. He knew that he was wasting away in vain sparks the little sacred fire which Heaven had lit in his soul during the fine days of his youth. He foresaw that his works would perish with him. To distract his mind from such melancholy thoughts, he exhausted all kinds of dissipation. Toward the end of his life he made some approach toward Nature. He built, by way of an *amende honorable*, a kind of temple to her; that is to say, a Cabinet of Natural History, in which Buffon more than once studied. At his death this cabinet was sold for a hundred thousand livres. It was all that Boucher left of a great fortune. "It was," he said, "to pay for his funeral."

He went incessantly into society. Madame Geoffrin, who had succeeded to Madame de Tencin's circle, gave two dinners a-week, on Monday to artists,

and Wednesday to men of letters. Marmontel, who dined rarely then, except when he dined out, was at Madame Geoffrin's table on both Mondays and Wednesdays. In his memoirs he passes the guests in review. He says, in reference to the artists, "I was at no loss to perceive that, with natural ability; they were almost all deficient in study and culture. Good Carle Vanloo possessed, in a high degree, all the talent that a painter can have without genius; but he was without inspiration, and to make up for it he had devoted himself but little to those studies which raise the soul and fill the imagination with great objects and great thoughts. Vernet, admirable in the art of painting water, the air, the light, and the action of these elements, had all the models of compositions of this class very vividly present to his imagination; but beyond this, although he has some spirit, he was a commonplace artist. Latour possessed enthusiasm; but, his head already confused with the political and moral questions on which he fancied that he could argue ably, he thought himself humiliated if any one spoke to him about painting. If he took my portrait, it was only on account of the complaisance with which I listened to him as he regulated the destinies of Europe. Boucher had some fire of imagination, but little truth, still less dignity. He had not seen the graces in respectable company. He painted Venus and the Virgin after the nymphs of the green-room, and his language, as well as his

pictures, reminded one of the manners of his models and of the tone of his studio."

Madame de Pompadour and Madame Dubarry both admired Boucher's talents. What was more natural? Did he not seem made expressly to paint these queens by chance? Were they not two of those muses whence he derived inspiration? Had they not the coquettish grace, the wayward glance, and the smiling lips, which make up the charm of Boucher's women?

He became first painter to the king on the death of Carle Vanloo. His elevation to the dignity surprised no one. Nothing caused astonishment then, when Madame Dubarry was seated on the throne of Blanche of Castile. Besides, as was the king, such was the painter. Louis XIV. and Lebrun, Louis XV. and Boucher, had they not the same kind of dignity?

Of all this generation, crowned with faded roses, Boucher was the first to die, in the spring of 1770, with his pencil in hand, although he had been ill for a long time. He was alone in his studio. One of his pupils wished to enter. "Don't come in," said Boucher, who perhaps felt that he was dying. The pupil closed the door and withdrew. An hour after Francis Boucher, the painter, was found expiring before a picture of Venus at her toilet.

He led the way. All the painters, the abbés, the poets of gallantry, soon followed him to the dark mansion of the dead, the King of France at their

head, supported by his reader in ordinary, Montcrif, who had never read any thing to him, and by his famous librarian, Gentil-Bernard, who had never turned over a leaf of a book in his life. It pleases my fancy to depict to myself this half-funereal, half-burlesque spectacle of all those men of wit who departed so gaily, but persisted in uttering a witty speech before dying, in order to die as they had lived. In a few years all the wit, the joy, the fascination, and the folly of the eighteenth century were seen to descend into the tomb. Without speaking of Madame de Pompadour, Boucher, Louis XV., and of some celebrated actresses, such as Madame Favart and Mademoiselle Gaussin, we behold in the mournful procession Crébillon and his libertine stories, Marivaux and his delicate comedies, the Abbé Prévost and his dear Manon, Panart and his vaudevilles, Piron and his jokes, Dorat and his madrigals, the Abbé de Voisenon and the children of Favart, the most certainly his of all his works. Who besides? Rameau, Helvetius, Duclos, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Are these enough? Who then will remain to finish the century? The Queen, Marie-Antoinette, will remain, who also lived this mad life, who smiled like the women of Boucher, who is destined to be punished for all these fine people, who is destined to die on the guillotine, between a woman of the town, Madame Dubarry, and a king of the populace, Hébert, to die with dignity, crowned with

her whitened locks, bleached by a night of heroic penitence.

The history of Boucher has its logic, the life of the painter accords with his work; there is no more truth in the passion of the one than in the picture of the other; both, however, must be taken as the expression of an epoch. It is thus that Boucher has survived. The fact of his being true to his time proves him true in one respect, in spite of all his falsehoods. His style of painting has not a positive value in the annals of art; it is scarcely an episode of partial interest, it is a degeneracy. This frivolous era is lost between two serious epochs. The eighteenth century was the prodigal offspring of a worthy and serious age. Boucher is to Lesueur what Fontenelle is to Corneille. Affectation distorted original character, wit destroyed naturalness, and beauty, the eternal law of art, becomes only a graceful caprice.

Does Boucher demand of us any profound criticism? When we say that he was the painter of coquettish graces, have we not said all? On examining his character and his works more closely, we cannot venture thus to despatch him with a single word. His mind felt more than one deep inspiration, more than once was his heart deeply moved by the remembrance of Rosina. Nature has eternal rights which command our obedience: there is no use in trying to escape, she always reasserts her sway. Let us, therefore, not judge Boucher hastily, but turn over his work with a

patient hand. Is there, then, nothing grand and nothing beautiful beneath those false seductions? Have the light of the sun and the light of art never illuminated those landscapes and those faces? Did Boucher never reach the truth?

The grand gallery of the Louvre has not a single one of his pictures. It appears to me, however, that he deserves a little space in a good light, between his friends Watteau and Greuze. Who would complain of seeing what kind of pictures were painted a century ago by him who became painter in chief to the king, director of the Academy, and of the Gobelins? For those who study, there would be the material for curious comparisons; for those who seek only for amusement, there would be so many pretty pictures the more. We have a singular mode of being national in France. We are so hospitable to foreigners that there is no room left for the natives. For the last few years, it is true, an asylum has been deigned Boucher in a badly-lighted gallery, that on the side of the river, which greatly resembles a cemetery of art, to judge by the silence and solitude which reign there. Two paintings of the painter of Louis XV. are to be found there; the first chapters of his *Pastoral Amours.* Nothing is more agreeable to the eye. We advance, lost in astonishment: the eye loses itself in the voluptuous vagueness of the landscape. We smile on those queens disguised as shepherdesses; we detach ourselves from the present; we follow those doves in their amorous

flight; we lose ourselves, completely overcome, in those scented groves. Where are we? On the banks of the Lignon, or in the paths of Cytherea? On the freshly-grown grass of what blooming flowery Eden are we treading? The dream lasts but a moment. Such a terrestrial paradise never existed anywhere; such shepherds never lived. They are pale ghosts of Watteau whom Boucher has reanimated with roses. We soon withdraw without retaining the interest which had seized us at first sight; but smiling at that air of magic which Boucher had the art of casting over all his faults.

I have some other paintings of his before me—*the Sleep of the Bacchantes*, *the Intoxication of the Loves*, *Jupiter carrying off Europa*, *the See-saw*, *Mercury Teaching Cupid to Read*, and *the Basket of Flowers*. This last picture is the most beautiful: the shepherdess, Astrea (her feet are bare, and her locks are floating in the wind), is lying asleep, within two steps of a fountain, against a tufted hedge without thorns, or, at least, the thorns are concealed. Some pretty white sheep are browsing or bounding over the meadow, which has more flowers than grass: a dog, all bedecked with ribands, is watching over the flock and the imprudent shepherdess at the same time; the sky is divinely serene. There are, however, some clouds here and there, the clouds of love. The silence is almost like that of night; scarcely do we hear the murmur of the breeze, but do we not hear the beating heart of

Astrea? She sleeps, but she dreams. We see by the agitation of her pretty feet that it is a dream of love. Patience! the picture becomes animated. The shepherd Amyntas comes from the neighbouring arbour, a true Cytherean arbour; he carries in his hand a beautiful basket of flowers, flowers of all seasons; the painter has culled them without looking at his almanac. There is even in the bouquet a flower of a new species, half-concealed by the others. This flower, which spoils the bouquet somewhat, but by no means the entire affair, is a *billet-doux*. The shepherd advances mysteriously, he smiles at the watchful dog, he hangs his basket of flowers on the tufted hedge, by the arm of the sleeper, who is no longer asleep, but pretends to be. Let her who has never pretended to be asleep cast the first stone at her! Astrea, therefore, listens with closed eyes: she hears the wind rustling through the sedge, the refreshing murmur of the fountain. What then? You may guess! She hears the cooings of the doves, and the sighs of the shepherd Amyntas; she inhales the sweet perfume of the verdure, but above all the intoxicating perfume of the basket of flowers. O poor innocent, beware of Love, he has just seized an arrow! The shepherd Amyntas advances a step, his lips have made two; here the dog barks in spite of the caresses of the traitor, but the dog cautions the sleeper too late, the kiss is taken. Almost all Boucher's power is to be found in this single picture. We find it in his amorous concep-

tion, his fictitious grace, his mournful and smiling landscape.

The two volumes of Boucher at the Print-Room of the Royal Library do not contain a quarter of his works. We must seek elsewhere, also, for the best engravings, copied after him, and sometimes engraved by himself. Thus he has engraved, with a master-hand, the only of Watteau which we possess. On looking at these two men, Watteau and Boucher, we do not discover the least trace of the character of their talents. They are without grace, and almost without the expression of the least genius. Watteau is hard and heavy; Boucher looks somewhat like an old Roman. Lavater would be much embarrassed beholding them and their works. As for Boucher, the physiognomist would maintain the truth of his system, by appealing to the dress, for Boucher was dressed like Dorat, with the same elegance and precision.

If caprice or curiosity induce you to consult Boucher's works in the Print-Room, you will find at the outset a *Rachel*, which recalls somewhat his dear Rosina; on the next page, a theatrical-looking *Christ*, absurdly treated; followed by a *Descent from the Cross*, which is more like a Descent from the *Courtille;* some *Saints*, who will never go to Paradise; *Seasons* and *Elements*, represented by puffy Cupids, with verses in similar taste; some *Muses*, who will not inspire you in the least; a *Rape of Europa*, which re-

calls Madame Boucher; *Venus* at all ages; some curious imitations of David Teniers; a *Portrait of Boucher*, at the time he turned Flemish painter: he is in full rustic costume, wrapped in a fur robe, and wearing a cotton nightcap. After having failed in the true, he returned to the graceful. 'After these imitations of David Teniers, you will find the *Pastoral Amours*, which are Boucher's masterpieces. You will find in them imagination, voluptuousness, grace, magical effect, and even merit in the landscape. Salute after these *Babet, the Flower-Girl;* an *Erato*, she who inspired Boucher, and not the Muse of the Greeks; some *Girls*, harvesting, gardening, begging, and reaping; some *Profiles*, almost worthy of Callot; salute those *Chinese Figures*, who appear to have detached themselves from your screen, your fan, or your China porcelain. Let us return to France: unfortunately, Boucher always remained somewhat of a Chinese. But patience: here we have true comedy, the comedy of Molière; all the scenes are there painted in a piquant and almost natural manner. The last *Valères* are not dead; neither are the last *Célimènes.* Comedians in ordinary to the king would find much to study there, if they have not already done so. For my part, I should be very readily contented with the style in which Bouchier enacts Molière's comedies.

The second volume opens with the *Graces.* the Graces at the bath, the Graces everywhere. *Cupid* reappears; always Cupid, this time enchained by

the Graces, with this couplet of the Cardinal de Bernis:—

"How many fickle ones are bound
With the girdle of the Graces!"

The girdle of the Graces is a garland of flowers. After this comes (she could not be be ter placed) Madame de Pompadour; but the painter painted her when she was too old to make a Grace of. The scene changes. We find German engravings after Boucher. Boucher engraved by serious Germans—what a grotesque translation! Here the painter shows us his handwriting: it is like the clear and graceful handwriting of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. We pass to religious subjects, but do not be afraid; Boucher will be able to laugh again. These are the designs for the *Paris Breviary*, made doubtless after the designs of Petites-Maisons. It is a tolerably pretty satire. For example, he makes Faith hover over the Invalides, and Hope over the Louvre and Tuileries. The archbishop and the king did not understand it. There yet remains a pleasant *Country Fair*; some pretty designs for romances; the *Cries of Paris*, freely treated; a poetical composition of a fortune-telling scene in the open air; an Olympus, with the gods boldly exhibited in full muster.

All these works do not constitute a great painter, but do they not offer a reasonable protest against the disdainful airs which some persons affect towards Boucher? To judge an artist of the second rank

properly, we must behold him in his own time, in the presence of his works and his contemporaries, after having viewed him at a distance. We must hear what he has to say, so to speak, and not condemn him by default. If Boucher could speak to us, he would say, "I saw what was passing around me; I saw that religion, royalty, genius, and all that was great, was changing, failing, dying out. Could I become a man of genius among such dwarfs? and, besides, had I the stuff to be one? I did as everybody else did. They laughed, they made love, they became intoxicated after supper. I laughed, I made love, I became intoxicated. You can see by my pictures that it was so. The priests were playing at religion, the kings at royalty, the poets at poetry; do not think it strange that I played at painting. I have done wrong to no one, at least intentionally. I have made two millions by my pencil; it was so much drawn from the rich; I have made such good use of it, that I have scarce enough left to bury me with. If you wish to know to whom I owe my poor talents, I must answer you that I know nothing about it. I have admired alternately Watteau, Rubens, and Coustou."

Watteau, Rubens, and Coustou: these were Boucher's three masters; but he never had the sparkling animation of the painter of the *Fêtes galantes*, nor the splendid touch of the great Flemish colourist, nor the noble dignity of the French sculptor (it must be con-

fessed that the marble dignifies). By the side of these three masters, Boucher may here and there hold his ground. More than one admirer of the past will smile at his coquettish grace, at his foolishly-lively imagination, at the blue haze of his landscapes, at the voluptuous mysteries of his arbours, at his faces so blooming that they appear fed on roses. according to the expression of an ancient writer. Diderot, who founded an encyclopedia, who invented the drama of common life, who opened a school of morals, did not desire to know anything about the painter of Madame de Pompadour and Madame Dubarry, especially as he let himself be guided somewhat in his ideas on painting by Greuze, the born enemy of Boucher. See, however, how Diderot criticises this painter, in his free way of speaking: "I venture to say that Boucher never once saw Nature, that Nature at least which is formed to interest my soul, yours, that of a well-born child, that of a woman who feels; among an infinity of proofs which I might give, a single one will suffice; it is that, in the multitude of figures of men and women which he has painted, I defy any one to find any suitable for a bas-relief, still less for a statue. There are too many airs, graces, and affectations for a severe taste. There is no use in his displaying them to me naked, I always see the rouge, patches, trinkets, and all the trumpery of the toilet. Do you think that he had any idea of the charming and noble figure of Petrarch,

As for those fine and delicate analogies which summon objects upon the canvas, and unite them together by imperceptible threads, I do not believe that he knew what they were. All his compositions seem to the eye to be keeping up an insupportable hubbub. They are the most mortal enemies to repose which I know of. When he paints children he groups them well, but they are always fooling away in the clouds; for of all this innumerable family you will not find one employed in the actual occupations of life, in studying his lesson, reading, writing, or twisting hemp. They are romantic and ideal beings, little bastards of Bacchus or Silenus. These children could be readily produced in sculpture on the surface of an antique vase. They are fat, plump, and chubby: If the artist could sculpture in marble, his style would be in character. He is not, however, a fool; he is a false painter of merit, as there are false wits. He has not the thoughts of art, he has but its *concetti*." After this preamble, however, Diderot condescends to declare, in reference to four pastoral scenes, that "Boucher had his rational moments," that he had produced a charming poem. A little further on he retracts a little of his severity: "I have spoken too harshly of Boucher. I retract. I have seen children by him which are really and truly children. Boucher is graceful, and by no means severe; but it is difficult to unite grace and severity."

Boucher, who had a hundred pupils, has left no school. Fragonard alone, among his pupils, often

recalls the style of his master; and Fragonard threw away more recklessly than Boucher a more gifted mind. Greuze, at the same time that he looked down upon Boucher, with his friend Diderot, recalls also the freshness and smile of this painter. Can we not find some trace of him in the *Broken Pitcher?*

David was also a pupil of Boucher, doubtless because he was his cousin; but in this case the lessons of the master cannot be traced in the pupil. While he admired Boucher, he feared to follow his example. It is the mournful consequence of excess in art, that the reaction which follows takes the opposite extreme. To reflecting minds the departing Boucher explains the coming David. The latter makes sublimity rigid after the other has relaxed grace. Boucher was nothing more than a fancy painter, because he tried to trick out Nature in prettiness; David only a conventional painter, because he sought the real in the types of an ideal statuary. Thus did both, one in almost forgotten valleys, the other on proud hill-tops, fail in their aims, and contend without victory. Nature was before them, ever opening infinite horizons to them beyond the mountains, but they passed by without regarding her.

And yet Boucher will live in the history of French painting. He did not raise his head to receive the golden crown which genius has placed upon the head of Poussin and Lesueur. He could not grasp with his profane hand the chain of divine sentiment which reaches from Poussin to Géricault, after having

touched Lesueur, and some others of less dignity; but like a second Anacreon, Boucher crowned himself with vine-leaves in the company of his mistresses; and with careless hand stripped off the leaves of the garland of flowers, which is the Graces' girdle, of that garland which a century ago was the girdle of France.

LANTARA.

THE tavern was almost always the studio, the castle in the air, the horizon of Lantara, in which respect he resembled two Flemish painters, Brouwer and Craesbeke. It is not my aim to write a course of morals on painting. Like the poets, like all disciples of art, the painters have the privilege of descending into the dark depths of vice, and thence taking their flight to the splendours of art. Striking contrasts have been witnessed; the lower the soul descends, the greater force does it seem to gather for its upward course. St. Augustine has expressed it, "While the Angel of Darkness spreads over us the shade and luxurious boughs of terrestrial pleasure, the guardian Angel, far from abandoning us, sheds upon our arid hearts the chaste dew of the celestial fields; it hovers above and around us, as if to cover us with its white wings." However, passing through the forest of pleasure, man frequently ends by leaving there his pure robes. They are by little and little torn to shreds; as soon as the soul has undergone the first shock, the mischief is done, the mischief is for a long time irreparable; the horizon becomes troubled, the imagination loses its morning freshness,

thought only casts a pale ray here and there, producing neither heat nor light.

Nothing is known of the origin of Simon-Mathurin Lantara. It is said that he was born at Fontainebleau, or near Montargis. His father was a poor sign-painter from Piedmont, his mother a dealer in small toilet articles. Their marriage appears to have been consummated without the aid of the priest. The painter and the shopwoman were none the happier on that account. However, according to the phrase consecrated by usage, Heaven blessed their union, since they had a great number of children. Mathurin early became familiar with the sad spectacle of a father who got drunk and beat his wife when the wine was bad. Mathurin promised himself, if he should one day be able to drink his wine, that he would have good wine. He kept his word, as you will see. In his father's house he early became acquainted with the sorrows of wretchedness. He saw his mother weep, he wept with her; she ended by consoling herself, he does not dare to say how: he consoled himself too; perhaps he ought to have wept all the more; but he did not come into the world to be always crying. To console himself he went out. He was little more than twelve years old when the grand spectacle of Nature had already an interest for him. Escaping from school and boyish amusements, he carelessly lost himself in the forest. Overpowered with wonder at the old moss-covered

trees, the savage rocks, the smiling vistas, the steep hillsides, whence the sand pours down like a sparkling fountain, he followed with a ravished glance the thousand changing tints which the sunlight scattered here and there. The sun seen through the trees was to him a magic picture. By being present at all the metamorphoses of Nature, he became cognizant of her mysteries. He early learned the harmony of earth and sky, the gentle tremblings of the plants before the gathering storm, the fresh blooming of the trees, bushes, and flowers, after the rain and the storm had passed over Nature, the cheerfulness of the morning after the sun has dispersed the fog hovering over the hill-tops, when the breeze scatters the dew and the perfume of the flowers, the religious melancholy of the twilight, when the sun has but a ray left, a ray for the spire which looks so blue beyond the green trees, for the labourer who has reached the last furrow, for the gleaner who is smiling beneath her burden. Mathurin Lantara became passionately attached to such sights. The day was soon not long enough for his poetical wanderings. He sometimes passed the nights in the fields, under the clear moonlight; he sat down on the edge of a pond or lake, and there, listening to the prophetic bird of night, his head resting on his hand, he contemplated the moon as it was reflected through the foliage in the watery mirror. He was seized with so ardent a love for Nature, that he talked aloud to the plants and trees.

Lantara communed with the plants; never with men. If he met a shepherd or a hunter, he got out of the way as quickly as he could, as if he had feared being caught in some piece of mischief. An old canon of Fontainebleau, however, who was also fond of walking, succeeded, by degrees, in taming this young savage. He followed him; was one day a witness to his tender apostrophes to the daisies and violets, the sun and the clouds. He spoke to him with so much mildness and sympathy, that Lantara listened to him with interest, without thinking of taking flight. The next day a similar meeting took place. The canon had the fables of La Fontaine in his hand. —"Do you know how to read, my child?"—"Yes," said Lantara, "but I get very tired of it."—"I will give you this book, which will not tire you."—They walked along together; the canon sat down to rest at the foot of an immense sand-bank. Lantara, without troubling himself about his old friend, cut a stick and began to trace figures at his feet. The canon, who has related this incident, does not tell us what was the subject of the sketch; he contents himself with relating that Lantara, more solicitous about the colour than the outline, availed himself of the varieties of white, grey, red, yellow, and blue sand. He had tints of all sorts for the composition of this new style of mosaic.

The autumn, with its yellow leaves; the winter, with its hoar frost, had also their charms for Lantara.

He followed Nature, step by step, in all her works: works of life and works of death. In the autumn he went to the desolate ravine, to see the leaves roll in the torrent; in winter he saddened his mind before the solemn representation of death.

We lose trace of Lantara between his fifteenth and his twenty-fifth year. It is said that, on his arrival at Paris, he stumbled into the studio of a dauber, who, struck with the talent of the youth, undertook to lodge and board Lantara for his work, reserving to himself the right of signing the best landscapes at his own pleasure. This is, word for word, the same story as that of Brouwer, another painter of the tavern. It has also been said that Lantara studied in a wretched studio at Versailles, with a peddling painter, who made him paint the backgrounds of his pictures, at the rate of forty sous a day. These are not very reliable stories. I prefer to believe that Lantara had no other teacher than his father, the sign-painter; his own instincts taught him the rest.

We find him again at Paris, still solitary, still poor; he painted moonlights and sketched forests, but was not aware of his genius. How can we believe the fact that everybody lauded in his presence the rose-coloured landscapes of Boucher? He would not submit to become a follower of this bad master, who saw Nature only in the heathen mythology. Lantara had been to a better school; he had seen Nature only as she was, in all her magic power, without peri-

phrasis, and without hyperbole. He knew nothing in the world about drawing, but how did it happen that, with three strokes of his pencil, he could detach a tree from the flank of a mountain, and make a waterfall dash over the rugged rocks? It was because he was his own master; he was an inspired painter, like Giotto, like so many others, predestined to be artists.

Do you wish to know what use he made of his talents?

In a dingy and dilapidated house, in the neighbourhood of the Louvre, above a fruiterer, above a forgotten dancing-girl, above a sacristan, had Lantara built his nest. This dwelling of the painter's is so bare and desolate that a sheriff's officer would not think it worth an attachment. A truckle-bed, a table, an easel, form pretty much its entire furniture. How could poor Lantara have abandoned the pleasant landscape of Fontainebleau for such a retreat? We might understand it if the window looked out upon any prospect, but none is to be seen. Nought is visible but chimneys and garret-windows, a little sunlight through the smoke. Lantara, however, never sees this sad picture. His memory is great. He had only to descend into himself to recover, in all their morning freshness, in all their springtime grace, the landscapes in which his first fifteen years had been embosomed. See, he has inscribed here and there, on the blue paper of his chamber, whole pages of his recollections. He needed for this only a little charcoal and a little

chalk. Besides, he scarcely ever works in this room, unless inspiration gets the better of idleness, which seldom happens, since inspiration never moves him, except at the sight of a glass of old wine. As soon as he is on his feet he descends to the next wine-shop or the next café. At both there is a large book, which is presented to him as soon as he arrives. While breakfast is preparing, he opens the large book, and makes a drawing in it in less than a quarter of an hour. He calls this Rabelais' quarter of an hour. The drawings do not remain long in the large book, for connoisseurs pay for them in advance. When Lantara has breakfasted he takes a walk like a good citizen of Paris with nothing to do. He was a great simple child, like La Fontaine, amusing himself with everything, forgetting time and place, with the proverbial carelessness of an artist. He returns to dine, sometimes at the café, sometimes at the wine-shop, according to the caprice of the moment; it is the same story as in the morning: the great book lies on his table. To stimulate the talents of the designer, the innkeeper spreads before him the oldest bottles in his cellar. After dinner Lantara takes another walk, like a careless idler who has all his time to spare. In the evening, being no longer able to promenade, he drinks to pass the time. He is really the most good-natured drunkard in the universe: he drinks generous wines; each glass engenders some piquant novelty, some original sally. Toward midnight he re-enters his sorry abode,

and sleeps marvellously well in his wretched bed. It is hard to understand how, with his undoubted talent, he remained in this wretched atmosphere, with no other companion but poverty.

Incapable of managing himself, he needed a second Madame de la Sablière. An idle dreaminess had taken possession of him; his mind was lost amid a thousand deceitful temptations. If we may so speak, he was a denizen of earth only at meal-times. He loved only the sun and the forests. Man appeared to him to be only a superfluity of creation: he therefore had none of the vanities of this lower world. He concealed his name and his existence; he would scarcely ever sign his drawings or his pictures. He might have become rich, but of what use was money to him? The Count de Caylus paid him a hundred crowns for a picture; it was a moonlight view. Lantara was in an uncomfortable state, not knowing what to do with so much money. He fancied that all the rogues in Paris were at his heels; every passer-by had a sinister look. He did not dare to walk about, he did not dare to stop; he was no longer dreaming; it was all up with Lantara! He entered the tavern; it seemed to him that the very drunkards regarded him with covetous eyes. He no longer dared to get drunk: it was all over with him! He finally returned, pale and trembling, to his room. Where was he to put the hundred crowns? under his pillow. He went to bed; he could not go to sleep; his pillow is harder than

usual; the hundred crowns are constantly in his thoughts. The door is only half-closed; if a robber should pass up the staircase! and a thousand other disagreeable fancies. He takes a desperate resolution, and puts the sum in the drawer of his old table. He goes to bed again, and closes his eyes; scarce has he dropped half-asleep when he fancies that he hears those diabolical crowns dancing a shuffle; a clear and sharp noise excites him to the highest degree; he awakes with a bound like a kid; at last he goes to sleep for good, but he is not at the end of his dreams. The crowns are metamorphosed. Lantara beholds a solemn procession of well-crusted bottles pass before him. He wishes to seize something, but he grasps only a shadow. In a word, he sleeps badly, like a bad rich man. In the morning Lantara takes his money, cursing riches as he does so. He goes to the tavern to relate his misfortune: certain worthy persons compassionate, and aid him, by good bumpers, to free himself of his crowns. He joyfully resumes his course of life, his careless wretchedness, his vagabond reveries.

Poverty was his veritable muse of inspiration. As soon as he was possessed of a crown he could do nothing. It is related that some great lord—his name is not given—summoned the painter, and expressed a wish to lodge him in his mansion. Not daring to refuse a nobleman so devoted to the arts, Lantara went and installed himself in the mansion with his slender

baggage. He found himself very ill at ease, like a man expatriated. Vainly did he essay to paint or sketch, he was no longer in the atmosphere of his genius. Like Béranger, he had left his wooden shoes and his lute at the door. He escaped without saying a word, and returned to the tavern, saying, "I have at last shaken off my golden mantle."

Lantara was wonderfully himself under the roof of the poor artizan, before a wretched hearth, enlivened by half-naked children. There he said all that he thought: he spoke of his father, who was poor; he delighted in narrating, in his strange way, his tavern adventures. What mattered the gilding of the palace to him who appreciated only the riches of Nature?

Lantara did not belong to his age. The noise and pomp of the reign of Louis XV. had not seduced or reached the simple poet of the forest of Fontainebleau. Besides, nothing, as Madame Belloc has said, was real to him except that which had no existence. He was born to live in the freedom from care of a country life. Forced to live in Paris, he sought to deceive himself by painting landscapes; if he drank, it was still to deceive himself. With him wine had almost the effect of opium, for his intoxication was calm, drowsy, dreamy; if not poetical like that of Hoffmann, at least pleasant and cheerful. La Fontaine tipsy would have given you a good idea of Lantara. This singular man not only lived apart from his time, but, so to speak, apart from himself. His body was only a coarse old tat-

tered garment, in which his soul clothed itself for want of a better; but between the body and the soul, the prison and the prisoner, there was scarcely ever any harmony. How many times in the same day did the soul fly away to the woods and the mountains, to breathe the aroma of the turf, or to expand in the thicket, with the bird and the flower, while the body rested on the miserable bed, or was dragged along, sad and desolate, to the tavern or to the back-shop of the fruiterer!

The fruitwoman was called Jacqueline. She was a young woman of Picardy, whose good looks had captivated Lantara. She was fresh-looking and good-natured, two treasures for a woman. She sang from morning till night, her clear voice ascending as high as the painter's room. During the fine season he opened his window; his mind, which was wandering far away, returned at the sound of Jacqueline's song. He closed his eyes, and fancied that the song came from his lost valleys, such was the rural freshness of the voice. Jacqueline, on her side, was alive to the glances of Lantara. When she saw him drunk, she pitied him from the bottom of her heart. It more than once happened that the painter, not being able to mount the stairs, halted at the ground-floor: thanks to the kindness more or less proper of the fruitwoman, Lantara, having no longer a family, had found in her a sister as well as a mistress. It was often owing to her that he did not die of hunger, abandoned to his

sorry bed. When he had no money to pay for his dinner, she discovered a thousand gentle reasons for his dining with her. He did not require much persuasion. In his days of poverty he descended to Jacqueline's apartment at the dinner-hour. By his very mode of entrance she saw that she must set a plate for him, for he sighed and looked towards the hearth. She was a providence to him in everything. If he was unwell, she nursed him. In winter she shared with him her small stock of firewood, and Lantara had always the largest portion: the best fruits on the stall, the rosiest and most velvety peach, the most golden grapes, were always his. Jacqueline was better than Thérèse Levasseur, she was more fresh and artless. We should not be astonished at Lantara's affection for her. She might, perhaps, by her careful solicitude, have drawn him for ever from the door of the wine-shop, but she died too soon to accomplish this good work. Lantara was stricken to the heart by her almost sudden death. He again found himself alone, and already growing old; he lost courage and returned to the wine-shop with greater recklessness than ever. It was with great difficulty that he consoled himself. Six months after the misfortune, if any one spoke to him of Jacqueline, he still sighed and wept, whether tipsy or not. He was never willing to sell a fine landscape, which he had painted in the happy days when Jacqueline sang. One day, when his neighbour, the superannuated actress, asked him why he thought so much of this picture, he

answered her, "Then you do not hear Jacqueline singing in the landscape."

If I should speak of other amours of Lantara, I should be forced to descend too low; I prefer to pass them over. It has been said that he had met Madame Dubarry. They were both on the same road, he a poor hap-hazard lover, she a reckless sinner of twenty. Besides, Lantara was acquainted, I do not know how, perhaps through his mother, with an aunt of Madame Dubarry, Cantini, a celebrated dealer in articles for the toilet.

With his mode of life Lantara could not but die at the hospital. Every one predicted this as his last refuge. Far from trembling at this prospect, he spoke of it complacently, and thus, having fallen ill, had himself taken to La Charité (a celebrated hospital), as a matter of course. He did not die during his first admission. The superintendent, knowing whom he had to deal with, kept him as long as possible in a state of convalescence, persuading him that it would be dangerous to leave too soon. It will be readily perceived that the superintendent found his account in so doing. Lantara drew designs for him on tickets, in exchange for the use of the key of the cellar—"pay-tickets" he called them, as he set himself to work. He promised to return to such good quarters; he soon did so; but this time with death for a companion.

Lantara felt that he was dying. When one day the pencil and the glass fell from his hands, he felt that

he was on the brink of the tomb. He was not terrified, but resigned himself with a good grace. "If the soul is immortal," Lantara must have thought, "mine cannot run any risk of being in a worse place. If the soul is not immortal, there will still be something left of me in this life, a tuft of grass, a little flower on my grave, which will turn at its ease to the sun."

Before resuming the path to the hospital he was desirous of once more beholding Nature, his first and last friend here below. Where was he to go? He has only strength enough to reach the tomb! but for the farewell meeting he can call to his aid the legs of his youth. He followed the course of the Seine as far as Meudon. He ascended into the woods, rummaged with delight in the yellow leaves, lost himself rapturously in the paths amid the brushwood. He descended by the side of the château of Meudon toward Valaisy, and found himself as by enchantment in a small, deserted, and silent valley, surrounded by woods, diversified by small lakes, with no trace of humanity except a thatched cottage. I will not attempt to describe to you the happiness of our landscape painter. He walked about until evening, delighted with the quiet, scenting the fragrance of the late harvest, and of the apples fallen on the ground, gathering like a child the berries of the eglantine, the violet fruit of the heather, the last harebells of the fields, admiring the play of the sun on the lakes, and

the autumn leaves;—in fine, as happy as Jean-Jacques in the island of St. Pierre.

On his return in the evening Lantara knocked at the door of the hospital of La Charité.

In the closing hour the confessor of the hospital gave him absolution, after which he delivered a discourse to him on the happiness of death. He died at the same period with Gilbert, young like himself. Gilbert and Lantara were brothers in other respects than in poverty;* they both loved the forest and the mountain, the flowery meadow and the rustic path. Another dreamer of the same family followed soon afterward, to suffer on the couch of Gilbert, and die on that of Lantara: I mean Hegesippus Moreau. He, too, went to the school of Nature. Like Lantara, he disdained the shackles of human vanity. While his feet wandered in the pursuit of gross pleasures, his soul wandered in full liberty amid the green thickets or the ever-varying pictures of the clouds. Lantara could say with Hegesippus to his soul, when about to quit the earth, "Fly without fear!"—

> Of my faults, thou, fast-sleeping dove,
> Nor witness, nor sharer hast been!

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* Engravings have been made of some of Lantara's pictures. Daret has engraved the *Disagreeable Meeting*, the *Amorous Shepherd*, the *Happy Bather*, the *Amorous Fisherman*; Piquenot, the *Sheet of Water*, and the *Fish-cart*; Lebas, the first volume of the *Views in the Neighbourhood of Paris*. The burin has not, however, been able to reproduce that freshness of order and aërial mist which came without bidding to Lantara.

Lantara, like Greuze, has been a prey to the farce-writers. Four of them* set together to distort, unceremoniously, his original character. Do you know what they made of him? An historical painter! They represented him painting Belisarius! As if Lantara had ever known Belisarius! He never even heard of the Greeks and Romans! Under the bungling hands of these farce-writers, this most interesting drunkard is nothing more than a vulgar dram-drinker, philosophizing instead of drinking. Besides this they have increased the number of his works by the addition of a posthumous daughter of marriageable age. You have foreseen that all this stupid and meaningless talk, these bottles of sky-blue wine, these pointless couplets, is to wind up with a wedding, whereupon Lantara sings that he will henceforth paint *for glory and for Nature!*

Lantara left some pretty landscapes and a great number of drawings. These drawings, which are still sought after, are in black, on white paper, more frequently on blue paper, heightened with white; his moonlight views, the greater part of which are admirable, are all on blue paper. A great truthfulness in localities, a sky of marvellous clouds, agreeable foliage, lightly-touched distances, and a happy effect of light, are the distinguishing features of these designs. In his pictures we see that no one was ever more fully conversant with the strange caprices of nature. He

* Picard, Barré, Radet, Desfontaines.

expressed in a manner that could not admit of mistake the character of all hours of the day. His mornings breathe a ravishing freshness, which fills you with youth; his afternoons an amorous excitement which goes to your heart; his evenings, a serene melancholy which induces reverie; his rising and setting suns, and his moonlights, bear the stamp of original genius. He excelled in aërial perspective; the mist of his landscape closely approaches that of Claude Lorraine. He likes the poetical better than the picturesque; his Nature has neither deserts nor precipices; scarce do we find, here and there, a savage ravine, an Alpine rock, to enhance the effect of his leafy woods, his verdant paths, his mild skies. Lantara had never travelled, unless from Montargis to Paris. He had not seen fit to go farther in search of Nature. How many Flemish painters have there been who have produced masterpieces without travelling so far, and under a dull sky!

A remarkable landscape in the Gallery of the Palais Royal proves that this painter smiled in spite of himself in the most savage scenes. Donkeys, goats, and cows are passing over a marshy ground, bordered by gigantic rocks, ruined temples, and decayed trees. You fancy the effect is mournful: not at all: the rocks are not barren; the raspberry-vine trails its spreading tendrils over them, the hawthorn blooms about them; a clump of trees sway to and fro on the summit; these waters charm rather than chill you; you would be

pleased to wet your feet in the steps of that thoughtful donkey and the frisking little goat. Those temples in ruins almost tempt you to inhabit them, you, who are neither hermit nor cenobite. These decayed trees are only awaiting a renovating spring: in a word, this melancholy landscape is one of the gayest. The sky appears to advantage, like all those of Lantara. We are astonished with reason, that this strange man should have acquired the art of painting solely from intercourse with Nature. Scarce had he palette in hand before he was master of colour. His first landscapes are the freest and best. He painted from recollection, in his dismal retreat, badly lighted, without fire, without books, without friends. Pale misery, desolate loneliness, the noisy tavern, nothing was able to stifle in him the seed of genius which the Creator had planted. He was born a landscape-painter; he was a landscape-painter all his life, as easily as another is a stone-cutter. It has been said that he owed his talent to the wine-shop. If Lantara had passed the time he lost in drinking in study, he might have been a second Claude Lorraine.

Lantara often hit at the first attempt on the light and shade, the sunbeam passing among the trees, the waving image of the moon in the rippling water. He attained surprising effects by simple means. He produced groves which the imagination wanders in, amid the perfume of strawberries and mulberries, amid the melody of singing-birds! How clear are his

waters! how moist his banks! how his horizons blend with the sky! His weak point is the human form. When it was necessary to introduce one, his light touch becomes heavy and awkward; his men breathe less than the trees; they have no expression, no motion; he does not paint, he petrifies the figure. He, therefore, never liked to place a personage on the scene. However, as in France a landscape can only attract attention by figures, the first dauber who came along filled Lantara's landscapes with horses, cows, fishermen, and shepherds, fancying that he increased their value by so doing. It was almost a sacrilege! Creatures are not out of place on the earth. A cavalier escaping to a shelter in the wood, a shepherd who plaits rushes on the bank of the stream, a beggar drinking at a fountain, a peasant-girl crossing the ford on her donkey, a herd of dun cows scattered over a meadow, are a great resource for relief and perspective; but when the landscape-painter cannot paint figures, we must take him as he is, whether called Claude Lorraine, Ruysdael, or even Lantara, and respect his works. A marquis had ordered a landscape from Lantara.—"A landscape in your own style, Monsieur Lantara; follow the bent of your fancy; but do not forget a church and a vista."—Lantara did not allow the landscape to be waited for long. The marquis, astonished at the beauty of the scene, the freshness of the colour, the simplicity of the treatment, the faithfulness of the church, but,

seeing no figures, said to him, "Monsieur Lantara, you have forgotten the figures in your landscape."—"Monsieur the Marquis," the painter naïvely responded, "they are at mass."—The marquis had the barbarity to reply, "Well, I will take your picture when they come out."—Lantara thus unintentionally established a good maxim for landscape-painters who know not how to paint figures. How many landscape-painters would do well always to leave their figures at mass!

LOUIS XV.

Louis XIV. was hardly buried beneath the ruins of his majesty, when all the joyous passions lifted their heads gaily under Philip of Orleans. The regency was the prologue of the reign of Louis XV. A bold and free touch would be necessary to paint, with effect, those Saturnalia of the genius of France. That which existed in perfection under the regency was frankness; every one walked with his head erect, surrounded by his suite of vices; that mask of hypocrisy that had concealed all the faces of the court under Madame de Maintenon, was gaily torn to pieces, and trampled under foot; the regency leaned carelessly upon the unsteady shoulder of debauchery, crowning it with roses, and singing with it the loose songs of the tavern: they had no need of telling the world that they were bold fellows in those days. The confessors and devotees had given way to the rakes and courtesans. Who would dare to say so? but we, children of the *sans culottes* of 1792, and of the soldiers of Napoleon, would have been worthy to have lived under the regency. We have the same heart, we would have the same genius, if we had enough of it, but we no longer wear the same mask. Look, too, at the ideas of those

times; was it not supposed for an instant that there would be a social renovation at the death of Louis XIV.? Did not the people act towards Louis XIV. dead, as we acted towards Charles X. living? Louis XIV. was driven, kicked almost into his tomb in the church of St. Denis; France, after having paid dearly enough for her years of victory, abandoned herself to the priests, being humiliated and stifled by her neighbours; the king being dead, a revolution broke out in the minds of the people; the St. Simons and Fouriers of that day wished to elevate France, but it was only a dream, the enthusiasm of the moment. France remained crouching in fetters, the people in misery, and the human intellect in swaddling clothes. The Duke of Orleans then appeared, mocking at the nation, laughing at it without shame, intoxicating it with the fumes of his orgies. The most barefaced portraits, which show themselves along with his in this living picture of the regency, are those of the Cardinal Dubois, the Duke de Richelieu, Madame de Phalaris, and Madame de Parabère. In studying these portraits you may learn all the history of those days. The mother of the Duke of Orleans had fancied a very pretty story, descriptive by a presentiment, doubtless, of the life of her son. She used to relate that the fairies had been invited to be present at her confinement, that they had waved the enchanted wand over the cradle, and that each one had given her son a talent, so that he was endowed with all the talents.

But by a mishap, as always happens in stories, an old fairy had been forgotten, who having disappeared for a long time from the world, had been quite overlooked. Vexed at the neglect, she went leaning on her little crutch, but when she had arrived all the other fairies had given each one her gift to the infant. More and more enraged, she gave him the ruinous privilege of rendering of no avail all the talents he had received from the other fairies. She did more, said Madame de Parabère, after having one day listened to this maternal story; she added a vice to each virtue: this was the reason why the duke was so amiable in all his vice.

What a charming tutor for Louis XV., this regent, full of genius and gaiety, surnamed Philip the Gentle, who was born, according to Voltaire, for *pleasure and the fine arts;* who gave to the poet Dufresny ten thousand *louis*, because he was a descendant, as he himself was, from Henry IV., who ruled the evening, after supper, in the company of his friends and his mistresses, when he had nothing more to do or to say. This merry regent, whose whole life was a burst of laughter, who died without any anxiety about death, in the arms of the beautiful Phalaris, "his usual confessor," according to the songs of the times.

Love took Louis XV. by surprise, one April morning, as he was pressed to the somewhat lukewarm heart of Madame de Parabère; this love was almost maternal, almost filial, but was notwithstanding penetrated

by a ray rather too warm. The love of budding youth is like an April sky: at one time the sky is perfectly clear, at another it is all clouds and showers. The love of woman in her decline is like a rose that fades, the sun that sets, its perfume is more choice, its glance more tender. The king of eighteen years was intoxicated with Madame de Parabère in her decline, who welcomed him without fear, sighing a little for her subdued heart, no longer tumultuous, but full of past memories.

This love did not keep Louis XV. from crying with fright, when he heard of the arrival of the princess that he was to marry. This was getting on rather too fast for an adolescent. The old Cardinal de Fleury was so anxious for the credit of his king, that he bethought himself (no one but the Cardinal de Fleury could ever have thought of such a thing) of having in the bed-chamber of the young prince twelve beautiful pictures in the style of the times, such as the *Birth of Love*, the *Search*, the *Ravished Flower*, all adorned with verses after the pattern of those of the Abbé Chaulieu:—

Upon the freshness I fed
Of lips that only half-close;
Her mouth is as brightly red
And as sweet as a new rose.

See what abbés and cardinals amused themselves with in those days!

I will not relate all the wanton amours of Louis XV. The pretty and gallant history of the dynasty of the

petticoats has been a thousand times unveiled. Why repeat how Madame de Mailly, the Duchess de Châteauroux, the Marchioness de Pompadour, the Countess Dubarry, caused to bloom and bloom again, every year of that amiable poet's life, who threw to them his royalty as a plaything, with so much joy and recklessness? Why retrace, in this well-known picture with these charming faces, those thousand other beautiful women that were gathered so complacently for the pleasures of Louis XV., for the amusement of the king of France? The scandalous chronicles of the royal palaces have been too wantonly made use of. I resist the temptation of describing the suppers of Choisy, the mornings at the Trianon.

In the midst of all these pleasures, the king was ennuyèd. It appears that Louis XV. had little else to do than to become ennuyèd. One day the Duke de Choiseul said to him, after a long political digression, "The people suffer, sire." He answered carelessly, "I am ennuyèd."

Louis XV. found more noble interests in his wars of Alsace and Flanders. Glory tried to tear him away from pleasure. At Fontenoy, glory marched by his side; but Madame de Pompadour marched on the other side. Soon glory was vanquished for ever. In war as at court he was a poet, who gaily amused himself at the spectacle by the side of his mistress; he beheld what was going on as he kissed the hand of Madame de Châteauroux or Madame

de Pompadour. He was deficient in energy, but not in courage; he had even a disposition to greatness. Thus at Metz, when almost dead, he said to the Count d'Argenson, "Write in my behalf to the Marshal de Noailles, that while they carried Louis XIII. to his tomb, the Prince of Condé gained a battle."

After the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, the gazettes began their political tirades, the Encyclopedia burst forth with a great noise, the parliament and the clergy were in a state of great excitement. There were pamphlets and epigrams without end. In the midst of all this noise, politicians began to stammer, liberty spoke for itself now and then. The king remarked, "The claps of thunder [he alluded to war] would have been better than all these scratchings of pens." It is not just to accuse him of not having liked men of letters: he did not like those political reasoners who wished to rule France, but he favoured all those who were contented with singing only. Apropos to the reasoners he exclaimed, "Ah! how I pity those conscientious liars!" In order to console Louis XV. for his ignorance, the regent often remarked to him, that not more than half-a-dozen truths had floated since the deluge upon a sea of falsehoods.

He was completely the image of his time. He reposed upon the labour of Louis XIV., poesy reposed upon the masterpieces of the great age. Louis XV. played with royalty, the poets played with poetry! The French Academy was for the first time under a

cloud. As Piron remarked, they were the forty who had as much talent as four—"*qui avaient des talens comme quatre.*"

"In those days, instead of getting enraged, they sang. There was no longer any satire, or rather satire, not knowing what else to do, put itself under the protection of song. What a number of songs there were against the Jansenists, the Revolutionists, the Jesuits, *the ministers of folly, the dynasty of the petticoats, the well-beloved king!* Finally, as Camille Desmoulins remarked at a later day, France got tired of singing.

In the time of Louis XV., nothing was taken seriously, not even death, in spite of the priest, prayer, and extreme unction. Take one example out of a thousand. Rameau, on his deathbed, wearied with the religious ceremonies of the curé of St. Eustace, cried out angrily, "What the devil are you singing to me there, curé! you are out of tune."

From the first day, or rather the first night of the regency, French genius was only displayed at the expense of the heart and common sense. Every one had that kind of genius; it was the epidemic of the Abderites, grand ladies, citizens' wives, ladies' maids, all were women of genius. See Marivaux's comedies. When women meddle with genius, the kingdom is in danger; good sentiments disappear under fine words. One was ready to bargain away her truth for a sally of wit; another her virtue for an epigram. The genius which is without heart, is a terrible guest

that spoils and ruins us. Heaven only knows the injury it did in those fine times of the regency. The tender gallantry that had flourished at the court of Diana of Poictiers, had faded within the forgotten pages of the *Cyruses and Clelias*, the sentimental books of that day. The gallantry which flourished beneath the glances of La Parabère and La Pompadour, was worthy of the amours of Crébillon called the Gay. The word love no longer meant passion, hope, memory: it had become merely a synonyme for licentious intrigue. There was not a madrigal that did not conceal beneath its praises some artful design; every thing was laughed at, but especially the true emotions of the heart: people were hardly sincere to themselves. I had forgotten: the more nice had preserved some remembrance of the old times; certain *petits-maîtres* perfumed themselves with the same perfume as their favourite beauties, as in the olden times the knights were wont to wear the colours of their fair ladies. Thus a new intrigue might be discovered by the curious, by a peculiar perfume. An amorous confidence often began with, "Are you not aware that the duke is using the Cyprus-powder; the marchioness is fond of amber; the abbé powders himself with the same as the wife of the marshal?" The *petits-maîtres* might be seen varying their perfumes every day, in order to pas for being men of success in their intrigues. They did not always have possession of the mistresses they

published in this way. In love, the mere dream of it is a great deal. For such a dream what ludicrous farces were played! One would order his carriage for a mysterious rendezvous; an hour afterward he might be seen on foot, secretly coming in at the back-door; he would reach his bed-chamber by the back-stairs; he would be quietly eating his cold chicken while his equipage, drawn up at the corner of a street where a famous beauty lived, was the scandal of the whole neighbourhood. Another would take his solitary supper in his own small residence, and order guns to be fired off in order to announce to his neighbours his success. As for the women, it must be confessed, they also made use of these melancholy deceits; they boasted in the most artless manner in the world of *having attached to their car*, some charming rake who had the credit of only falling in love with beautiful women. A woman who had had three lovers boasted herself a philosopher; that was carrying philosophy rather too far. A disciple of Newton wrote to a lord of his acquaintance, in 1745: "I return with pleasure to a country where the fashion does not oblige a man to abandon a woman, whose only fault is that of being his wife, and to live with another woman, whose only merit consists in having belonged to all the world."

This strange gallantry had stupified all hearts; the talk was superficially brilliant, minds shone with tinsel, conversation assumed a peculiar jargon, but

the heart was forgotten. I ask you whether the romances of Crébillon called the Gay, and of his pupils, were adapted for the cultivation of the heart? The devil knows, doubtless, how the women passed their time. If they went to church, it was not for the sake of religion. The women rose from bed toward evening, put on their hoops—they had sometimes good reason for wearing hoops;—they daubed themselves with rouge and patches—in those days there was no space left for a blush;—and put on their loose robes with flowing trains. After having wasted three or four hours in powdering their hair and laughing at their husbands, they went out to listen to some fashionable preacher, or to behold some parade *à la mode.* On all sides was heard: "*Ah! zevalier, que c'est joli!*"—(Ah! my lord, how charming!) (the letter Z was used at every chance; in lisping it the mouth made such a pretty, smiling pout). Afterward they would go to some sad tragedy, as the execution of Damiens for instance, and they would exclaim—Madame de Préandeau is our witness—while they were quartering the criminal, by dragging his limbs apart with horses: "*Ah! les pauvres zevaux, que ze les plains!*"—(The poor horses, how I pity them!)

As a climax to all this, they would go to sup in the choice little mansions of those days. Listen to a Larochefoucault of those times: "Nothing is more delightful at present than the little suppers in the little

those places consecrated to Cupid and his mother, do not come near to the delight that these enchanting places offer. It is no longer in the groves of Paphos or Idalia, that pleasure is to be found. Our little mansions, these are the temples of Amathonta! it is here that she has her altars, her priestesses and her victims."

In those days, to be a man of fashion, it was necessary to begin by making a fool of one's self. Fashions change in France, but fools are stationary. How many young exquisites of 1850 are there who will recognise themselves in the exquisite of 1750! "*On the first November*, I am in the country because it is not the thing to remain in town during the holydays. It is supposed that I am with the youthful *Louise*, while, to tell the truth, I am all alone in an old prison of a house, where I am wearied to death."—"*On the third November*, I return to Paris, and I spread the report that I have been delighted. The wife of the president looked at me very significantly: I joined her party at whist; I lost in spite of the finest hand in the world: I kissed her hand, she smiled."—"*On the eleventh November*, I met, at the Palais Royal, the little counsellor. It was necessary for me to keep up my reputation with him; I did so at the expense of the reputation of all the beautiful women in the Palais Royal. Célise passed me, concealing her face behind her fan. 'See,' says I, 'she is hiding herself: this is

to see that women have not entirely stifled the voice of shame.'"

Whatever the héröides of Dorat and Colardeau may say, some of the amorous epistles of those days were anything but elegiac. The Duke de Richelieu answered, by way of consolation, as follows, to a young viscountess that he had abandoned: "Madame, do not grieve so, you are formed to be the happiness of one of the footmen of your hotel; I advise you not to lose any time, for love passes away with time."

Love metamorphoses itself often in France. Sometimes it is a dreamer. There are two kinds of dreamers, the dreamer on the borders of the Lignon, and the dreamers upon the shore of Lake Leman: at another time it is a *petit-maître* like Boufflers or Dorat; it is a shepherd playing his pipes; it is a *précieuse ridicule*, that opens, like Mademoiselle de Scudéry, her *circle* (salon), her *alcove* (bed-chamber), her *recess* (boudoir), to people of leisure; in a word, a half a century hardly passes in France before love changes its character. Love was never so unlike itself as in 1750; it was enough to make the world regret the bureaux of intellect and the bureaux of fashion (as they were affectedly called) of Mademoiselle de Scudéry; those assaults with epigrams of an affected conceit, and with far-fetched madrigals when the result was nonsense, but everything was conducted in all decency and honour, in the sentimental style of the day.

Art, in 1750, was only a plaything like love; it was a mere warbling and cooing of birds. Ask the composers of musical airs how they had to spice their musical ragouts; the painters of pastels how they had to put the roses into the cheeks; the small poets what a number of artificial bouquets and pretty nothings in verse they had to get up. Art, sacrificing its majestic beauty, followed the train of Madame de Parabère, all painted, perfumed, wearing patches, gorgeous with lace and ribands. Hence all those poetical bouquets to Chloris, those Graces in déshabille, those licentious madrigals, those unceremonious musical airs of the little operas, those Cupids whose roses even crowned their torches. One day, France had wandered so far from Nature and all virtue, that poetry and painting, as if from a chaste remembrance of earlier times, or, perhaps, in order to veil in history the scandals of their day, sang and painted the pure heaven of innocence; the idyl flourished again; but in spite of the pure rays and fresh dews which came from Germany, it flourished badly. The breath exhausted in pleasure, was wanting for poetry.

I am not now speaking of Voltaire, or of any of the philosophers; they belong to the eighteenth century, but not to the reign of Louis XV.; they never lived in the climate of the court; they belong to the France of all time, not to the France of Louis XV. In the France of Louis XV., when a poet, bursting from the earth with power and greatness, too proud to become

the buffoon of the debaucheries of the boudoir, had elevated himself upon his indignant pride, as upon a mountain, far above all that sickly generation, his only asylum was misery or exile, whether his name was Gilbert or Jean-Jacques.

The France of Louis XV. was Versailles. Versailles! was an endless carnival; the bishops disguised themselves as bold dragoons, the great ladies as prostitutes, the great lords as lackeys. But were these in truth disguises? This carnival of royalty and nobility has had its Lent, like all the carnivals in the world. On the 14th July, 1789, royalty and nobility covered themselves with ashes.

The atmosphere of Versailles stifled everything that was great and noble. In crossing the threshold of the palace, the men laid aside their dignity, the women their virtue. Louis XV., according to a maxim of the Duke of Richelieu, his moralist in gallantry, was, in the gayest way in the world, "the husband of all wives but his own." There are some lines of the king upon this subject, worthy of Voltaire. They were singing about Adam at one of his suppers, when Louis XV. turned off his couplet as follows:—

TO ADAM.

One wife thou hadst with thee,
  But that wife she was thine;
Here many wives I see,
  But see not her that's mine.

How many queens of a day and queens of a night!

France did not have enough duchesses and marchionesses to supply these profanities. It was necessary that the minister of the pleasures of the king—there was such a minister in those days—should fish for pearls in the sinks of poverty.

The palace of Versailles had an echo. Scandal was the fashion of the reign. Scandal burst forth in the châteaux, even in the innermost recesses of the convents. How many young lords there were who had their *Parc-aux-Cerfs!* how many young nuns who imitated the charming and romantic Louise of Orleans! In the château, the organ that was only accustomed to serious and doleful music, now resounded only for *Armidas* and *Orpheus;* an Italian buffo-singer mingled his voice, all terrestrial as it was, with the voices of young virgins. In the oratory painting had, without ceremony, installed itself, with its mythological baggage and arms; the Abbé Chaulieu handled, with all his usual carelessness, the *Bible and St. Thomas à Kempis.*

The fatal breath issuing from Versailles passed throughout France, over all good sentiments, as the storm passes over the flowers and the harvest: heroism, greatness, virtue, religion, all corrupted, died, were blotted out. Religion expired amid the theological discussions of the church, and the bloody exhibitions of the Convulsionnaires. Virtue was only a despised garment, which women were afraid would hide their beauty. Greatness, banished from the

court, from the palace, and the church,—greatness, which can never die in France, had concealed itself, waiting for better times, in the retirement of the provinces, in the shop of the artisan, under the thatch of the labourer, whence, later, in the hour of danger, it was seen coming forth so often, to rule the tribune, and to command our armies. In a word, heroism, the old French heroism, having left the field of battle for the perfumed boudoir, weakened itself with frivolous pleasures and frivolous occupations. Colonels embroidered tapestry. "All our warriors are merely coxcombs," said Monsieur de Coigny. The sword was no longer used to avenge insulted honour, but to protect the smile and the lap-dog of a marchioness. While they were avenging a dog with their swords, they were avenging each other on the field of battle with batons merely. The inheritors of Turenne and Condé went away to the wars for pastime, no longer animated with a noble love of France. Thus the enemy that beat the French found on the field of battle, instead of those brave leaders that appeared at a later day, actors, parrots, parasols, wigs, hair-powder, perfumery, and all the paraphernalia of a fine lady. This was the reason that the king of Prussia beat the French at Rosbach; this is the reason that the seven years' war was so humiliating to France.

The court of France had been until then the grand theatre of the country; it was above all there that the great political and human drama was enacted. But

under Louis XV. the drama is transformed into a show; the shows of the fairs are quite as good. The audience, until then silent, begins to hiss and make a disturbance. The scene changes; the drama is played out by the audience; the old theatre is turned into an antechamber and dressing-room; were it not for the Cardinal de Bernis and the Duke de Richelieu, Madame de Pompadour and Madame Dubarry, it would never be heard of again.

The national character was less respected than ever. The court affected to be English, and the army to be Prussian. No one desired to be a Frenchman anywhere. The whole world changed character. Statesmen became small poets; poets politicians; bankers and farmers-general became aristocrats; the great nobles became little abbés and farmers. Everything underwent decomposition; the chemistry which took its rise in the eighteenth century is the symbol of the eighteenth century. The priests *preached* merely like Christians; the magistrates laughed at the citizenlike dignity and sobriety of their predecessors. Ministers played like children with power, and power fell from hand to hand into the hands of the people.

Louis XV., in his careless ease, gave time to liberal opinion to make full headway. During peace the approaching steps of liberty could be heard. Liberty, that had so often set her foot in France to no purpose, now found all the approaches favourable. In this way Louis XV. did as much for Liberty as the whole army

of the philosophers. He was dignified, but he did not like dignity. Nothing annoyed him more than the grand court fêtes, where he was obliged to enact the farce of royalty. He loved solitude and quiet. He used to say, as he returned to the Trianon: "Here I am at last, in retirement from the world."—He hardly cared to know what was passing beyond the boundaries of his park.—"Let the ministers batter each other with the weapons of the church and the parliament; let the Parisians make songs about everything, even about the marchioness; it is all the same to me. I have laid my sceptre at the door, or rather at your feet; is it not so, marchioness? let your will be done."—And Madame de Pompadour, taking up the sceptre, amused herself with worrying at her caprice the clergy or the parliament, the Prussians or the song-writers. During the pomp of the public fêtes, Louis XV., who always suffered from ennui, was unmoved and taciturn; in private life he was the amiable poet, gay with love, animated with that smile of happiness that La Tour has so skilfully portrayed. He allowed himself tolerably often to exhibit evidences of wit. Thus, one day, the courtly artist just spoken of took it into his head, while painting the king's portrait, to discourse about affairs of state: "It must be confessed, sire, we have no navy."—Louis XV. recalled the attention of the artist to his pastel by the following answer: "Have you not Vernet, Monsieur La Tour?" —Another time, the Count de Lauraguais was speak-

ing in his presence, as if it was an affair of the greatest importance, of his voyage to England.—"And what did you learn by it, if you please?" said the king.—"Sire, I learned to think—" "About horses," replied the king, annoyed by his ostentation. Thus, French genius, not knowing what else to do, fell to making mere witticisms. The Marquis de Bièvre wrote a tragedy, all in puns, upon Vercingétorix.

It is too well known that the king had a seraglio at Versailles, the *Parc-aux-Cerfs*. The chroniclers have written a thousand scandalous accounts of it, in which the truth is concealed beneath innumerable romances. It is pretty well known that the poor girls imprisoned there took their first lessons of reading in the *Fables* of La Fontaine and the poems of Chaulieu. Their bedchambers were adorned with the most profane pictures, with that of the king to begin with.

Louis XV. thus passed his time; he never left this grove, embowered amid that terrestrial voluptuousness of which St. Augustine speaks. Such debauchery might be forgotten in Louis XV. the poet, but Louis XV., King of France! When Bouchardon made Louis XV.'s statue, he deceived himself, or he wished to deceive the beholders, in draping the king with a Roman toga, in crowning his forehead, unmarked with thought, with a crown of laurel, in arming his powerless hand with the sceptre of an empire. Louis XV. should have been crowned with roses; his hand should have held a glass; his lips enlivened with a careless

smile; and for drapery, he should have worn his embroidered vest and his silk breeches. Certainly, if the artist had done this, the heroes of 1792 would never have destroyed the statue; they would have been satisfied with a laugh at it.

But why slander at the present day this irreligious but witty reign, this reign so reckless and graceful, this merry reign, strewed with faded and decaying roses? Has not the blood of 1793 washed all that quite out? Why arm ourselves against that delightful half century, when the heart, with so much gaiety, folly, and disdain, was abandoned to voluptuousness, the head to intoxication, and reputation to all kinds of scandal? Why contend seriously against the orgies of worn out lords, careless poets, abandoned marchionesses, and indolent abbés? Because, while these merry roués were amusing themselves so delightfully, France, bent beneath the yoke and enslaved by debauchery, would have fallen drunk at the feet of the stranger, had not her most humble children, those that had been ground down by slavery and misery, risen in a day of indignation to save her from the bewildered hand of her kings and the crushing foot of her enemies.

Before France had fallen, however, this royalty of women and courtiers would have fallen of itself at the feet of the people, if the worn-out people had not, at the cry of the philosophers, lifted their iron arm to give it the last blow. Insulted by neighbouring

nations, trembling before that France which it had ruined, its last hour had come; Liberty knocked at the gate of the Louvre.—"Do not open it," said this tottering royalty, slumbering in the arms of voluptuousness. But Liberty broke down the gate; Liberty, overturning in its passage the whole band of courtiers, threw mercilessly the throne of France out of the window, that throne which was only the throne of licentiousness.

In succeeding to a royalty beset with storms, Louis XVI. became its martyr. He should have had heroic energy; he only had virtue. Of what use is virtue in a storm, except to die well? Louis XVI. died well: that is his whole life!

Notwithstanding the age grew old, it had commenced like a happy youth of fortune, who throws his money out of the window and his heart to the first comer. It was ashamed of the follies of its youth; it wanted retirement from pléasure. Too much of a scoffer to be religious, it welcomed philosophy as if it had been the promised land. It swept away with its foot its spangles and its tinsel. Truth (so called) was raised upon the altar. She had for her temple the theatre, the romance, the Encyclopedia; she had for her high-priests Voltaire, Jean-Jacques, Diderot. Louis XV., who was near his death, survived his reign. He was no longer king by the grace of God, since he had looked upon the fall of religion without stretching out a hand to protect it. France, that

Louis XIV. had so well united, in order to strengthen his dominion, was again divided in favour of every one; all that remained to Louis XV. was the Parc-aux-Cerfs, the "pillow of his debauchery," as Chateaubriand has said. The people, more suffering and miserable than ever, began to complain in threats; but Louis XV. heard nothing but the songs of Versailles. Commerce declined under its hinderances; the taxes ruined agriculture; rising industry, checked, sought more favourable lands; priests and courtiers settled upon France like crows, in never-ceasing flocks; the forces were beaten on land and sea; titles of nobility that were a dishonour were conferred only on cowardice and intrigue; the honours of the Bastile and of exile were conferred upon genius and courage. In a word, contempt without, contempt within, misery and slavery: this is the dark back-ground of the picture of this pretty reign, so gay and rose-coloured at first view. And how did this decay of France and this agony of royalty affect Louis XV.? He was near his last hour, and he saw nothing beyond the horizon of his own death.—"After me the deluge," said Louis XV. It was a deluge of blood!

MADEMOISELLE DE CAMARGO.

MADEMOISELLE DE CAMARGO almost came into the world dancing. It is related that Grétry, when he was scarcely four years of age, had an idea of musical tunes. Mademoiselle Camargo danced at a much earlier age. She was still in arms when the combined airs of a violin and a hautboy caught her ear. She jumped about full of life, and during the whole time that the music was playing, she danced, there is no other word for it, keeping time with great delight. It must be stated that she was of Spanish origin. She was born at Brussels, the 15th of April, 1710, of a noble family, that had supplied several cardinals to the sacred college, and is of considerable distinction in Spanish history, both ecclesiastical and national. Her name was Marianne. Her mother had danced, but with the ladies of the court, for her own pleasure, and not for that of others. Her father, Ferdinand de Cupis de Camargo, was a frank Spanish noble, that is to say he was poor; he lived at Brussels, upon the crumbs of the table of the Prince de Ligne, without counting the debts he made. His family, which was quite numerous, was brought up by Providence; the

father frequented the tavern, trusting to the truth that there is a Heaven that rules over children!

Marianne was so pretty that the Princess de Ligne used to call her her fairy daughter. Light as a bird, she used to spring into the elms, and jump from branch to branch. No fawn in its morning gaiety had more capricious and easy movements; no deer wounded by the huntsman ever sprang with more force and grace. When she was ten years old, the Princess de Ligne thought that this pretty wonder belonged of right to Paris, the city of wonders; Paris, where the opera was then displaying its thousand and thousand enchantments. It was decided that Mademoiselle de Camargo should be a dancing-girl at the opera. Her father objected strenuously: "Dancing-girl! the daughter of a gentleman, a grandee of Spain!"— "Goddess of dance, if you please," said the Princess of Ligne, in order to quiet him. He resigned himself to taking a journey to Paris in the prince's carriage. He arrived in the style of a lord at the house of Mademoiselle Prévost, whom the poets of the day celebrated under the name of Terpsichore. She consented to give lessons to Marianne de Camargo. Three months after his departure, M. de Camargo returned to Brussels, with the air of a conqueror. Mademoiselle de Prévost had predicted that his daughter would be his glory and his fortune.

After having danced at a fête given by the Prince de Ligne, Marianne de Camargo made her first ap-

pearance at the Brussels theatre, where she reigned for three years as first *danseuse*. Her true theatre was not there; in spite of her triumph at Brussels, her imagination always carried her to Paris; notwithstanding when she quitted Brussels she went to Rouen. Finally, after a long residence in that city, she was permitted to make her first appearance at the opera. It was on the 5th of May, 1726—for the famous day of her début has not been forgotten—that she appeared with all the brilliancy of sixteen upon the first stage in the world. Mademoiselle Prévost, already jealous, from a presentiment perhaps, had advised her to make her first appearance in the *Characters of the Dance*, a step almost impossible, which the most celebrated dancers hardly had dared to attempt, at the height even of their reputation. Mademoiselle de Camargo, who danced like a fairy, surpassed all her predecessors; her triumph was so brilliant that on the next day all the fashions took their name after her: hair *à la Camargo*, dresses *à la Camargo*, sleeves *à la Camargo*. All the ladies of the court imitated her grace; there were not a few that would have liked to have copied her face.

I have not told all yet: Mademoiselle de Camargo was made by love and for love. She was beautiful and pretty at the same time. There could be nothing so sweet and impassioned as her dark eyes, nothing so enchanting as her sweet smile. Lancret, Pater, J. B. Vanloo, all the painters that were then celebrated tried to portray her charming face.

On the second night of Mademoiselle de Camargo's appearance on the stage, there were twenty duels and quarrels without end at the door of the opera; every one wanted to get in. Mademoiselle Prévost, alarmed at such a triumph, intrigued with such success that Mademoiselle de Camargo was soon forced to fall back to the position of a mere *figurante*. She and her admirers had reason to be indignant. She was obliged to resign herself to dancing unobserved with the company. But she was not long in avenging herself with effect. One day, while she was dancing with a group of demons, Dumoulin, called the devil, did not make his appearance to dance his solo, when the musicians had struck up, expecting his entrance. A sudden inspiration seizes Mademoiselle de Camargo; she leaves the other *figurantes*, she springs forward to the middle of the stage, and improvises Dumoulin's *pas de seul*, but with more effect and capricious variety. Applause re-echoed throughout the theatre. Mademoiselle de Prévost swore that she would ruin her youthful rival; but it was too late. Terpsichore was dethroned. Mademoiselle de Camargo was crowned on that day Queen of the Opera, absolute queen, whose power was unlimited!

She was the first who dared to make the discovery that her petticoats were too long. Here I will let Grimm have his say: "This useful invention, which puts the amateur in the way of forming an intelligent

time to be the cause of a dangerous schism. The Jansenists of the pit exclaimed heresy, scandal; and were opposed to the shortened petticoats. The Molinists, on the contrary, held that this innovation was in character with the spirit of the primitive institution, which was opposed to the sight of pirouettes and pigeon-wings, embarrassed by the length of a petticoat. The Sorbonne of the opera had for a long time great trouble in establishing the wholesome doctrine on this point of discipline, which so much divided the faithful."

Monsieur Ferdinand de Camargo grew old with a severe anxiety about the virtue and the salary of his daughter: he only preserved the salary. Intoxicated with her triumph, Mademoiselle de Camargo listened too willingly to all the lords of the court that frequented the company of the actresses behind the scenes; it would have been necessary for the king to appoint an historiographer, in order to record all the passions of this *danseuse*. There was a time when all the world was in love with her. Every one swore by Camargo; every one sang of Cámargo; every one dreamed about Camargo. The madrigals of Voltaire and of the gallant poets of that gallant era are not forgotten.

However, the glory of Mademoiselle de Camargo was extinguished by degrees. Like fashion that had patronised her, she passed away by degrees, never to return. When she insisted upon retiring, although she was only forty years of age, no one thought of preventing her: she was hardly regretted. There was no in-

quiry made as to whither she had gone; she was only spoken of at rare intervals, and then she was only alluded to as a memory of the past. She had become something of a devotee, and very charitable. She knew by name all the poor in her neighbourhood. She occasionally was visited by some of the notabilities of a past day, forgotten like herself.

In the *Amusements of the Heart and Mind*, a collection designed, as is well known, to form the mind and the heart, Mademoiselle de Camargo is charged with having had a thousand and more lovers! Without giving the lie to this accusation, can I not prove it false by relating, in all its simplicity, a fact which proves a profound passion on her part? A pretty woman may dance at the opera, smile upon numberless admirers, live carelessly from day to day, in the noisy excitement of the world; still there will be some blessed hours, when the heart, though often laid waste, will flourish again, all of a sudden. Love is like the sky, which looks blue, even when reflected in the stream formed by the storm. It is thus that love is occasionally found pure in a troubled heart. But, moreover, this serious passion of Mademoiselle de Camargo was experienced by her in all the freshness of her youth.

One morning, Grimm, Pont-de-Veyle, Duclos, Helvetius, presented themselves, in a gay mood, at the humble residence of the celebrated dancer. She was

du-Louvre. An aged serving-woman opened the door. —"We wish to see Mademoiselle de Camargo," said Helvetius, who had great difficulty in keeping his countenance. The old woman led them into a parlour that was furnished with peculiar and grotesque-looking furniture. The wainscoting was covered with pastels representing Mademoiselle de Camargo in all her grace, and in her different characters. But the parlour was not adorned by her portraits only: there was a *Magdalen at the Tomb*, a *Veiled Virgin*, a *Venus*, the *Three Graces*, some *Cupids*, half-concealed beneath some rosaries and sacred relics, and *Madonnas*, covered with trophies from the opera!

The goddess of the place did not keep them a long time waiting: a door opened, half-a-dozen dogs of every variety of breed sprang into the parlour; it must be said, to the praise of Mademoiselle de Camargo, that these were not lap-dogs. She appeared behind them, carrying in her arms (looking like a fur muff) an Angora cat of fine growth. As she had not followed the fashion for ten years or more, she appeared to have come from the other world—"You see, gentlemen," pointing to her dogs, "all the court I have at present, but in truth those courtiers there are well worth all others. Here, Marquis! down, Duke! lie down, Chevalier! Do not be offended, gentlemen, that I receive you in such company: but how was I to know? . . . ."—Grimm first spoke.—"You will excuse, mademoiselle, this unannounced visit when you know the

important object of it."—"I am as curious as if I were only twenty years old," said Mademoiselle de Camargo; "but alas! when I was twenty, it was the heart that was curious; but now, in the winter of life, I am no longer troubled on that score."—"The heart never grows old," said Helvetius, bowing.—"That is a heresy, sir: those only dare to advance such maxims who have never been in love. It is love that never grows old, for it dies in childhood. But the heart—"—"You see, madame, that your heart is still young; what you have just said proves that you are still full of fire and inspiration."—"Yes, yes," said Mademoiselle de Camargo, "you are perhaps right; but when the hair is gray and the wrinkles are deep, the heart is a lost treasure; a coin that is no longer current."—While saying this, she lifted up Marquis by his two paws, and kissed him on the head: Marquis was a fine setter-dog, with a beautiful spotted skin.—"They, at least, will love me to the last. But it seems to me we are talking nonsense; have we nothing better to talk about? Come, gentlemen, I am all attention!" *

The visitors looked at each other with some embarrassment; they seemed to be asking of each other who was to speak first. Pont-de-Veyle collected his thoughts, and spoke as follows: "Mademoiselle, we have been breakfasting together; we had a gay time of it, like men of spirit. Instead of bringing before us, as the Egyptians in olden times, mummies, in order to remind us that time is the most precious of all things, we

called up all those gay phantoms which enchanted our youth: need I say that you were not the least charming of them? Who did not love you? who did not desire to live with you one hour, even at the expense of a wound? Happiness never costs too much—" Mademoiselle Camargo interrupted the speaker: "O, gentlemen, do not, I beg, blind me with the memory of the past; do not awaken a buried passion! Let me die in peace! See, the tears are in my eyes!"—The visitors affected looked with a certain degree of emotion at the poor old lady who had loved so much. —"It is strange," said Helvetius to his neighbour, "we came here to laugh, but we are travelling quite another road; however, I must say, nothing could be more ludicrous than such a caricature, if it were not of a woman."—"Proceed, sir," said Mademoiselle de Camargo to Pont-de-Veyle.—"To tell you the truth, madame, the worst fellow in the company, or rather he who had drank the most, declared that he was, of all your lovers, the one you most loved.—'The mere talk of a man who has had too much wine,' said one of us. But our impertinent emptied his glass, and backed his statement. The discussion became very lively. We talked, we drank, and we talked. When the last bottle was empty, and the dispute was likely to end in a duel, and we talked without knowing, probably, what we said, the most sober of the company proposed to go and ask you yourself which of your lovers you loved the most. Is it the Count de Melun? is it the Duke

de Richelieu? is it the Marquis de Croismare? the Baron de Viomesnil? the Viscount de Jumilhac? is it Monsieur de Beaumont, or Monsieur d'Aubigny? is it a poet? is it a soldier? is it an abbé?"—"Pshaw! pshaw!" said Mademoiselle de Camargo, smiling; "you had better refer to the *Court Calendar!*"—"What we want to know is not the names of those who have loved you, but, I repeat, the name of him whom you loved the most."—"You are fools," said Mademoiselle de Camargo, with an air of sadness, and a voice that showed emotion; "I will not answer you. Let us leave our extinct passions in their tombs, in peace. Why unbury all those charming follies which have had their day?"—"Come," says Grimm to Duclos, "do not let us grow sentimental; that would be too absurd. Mademoiselle de Camargo," said he, playing with the dogs at the same time, "which was the epoch of short petticoats? for that is one of the points of our philosophical dispute."

The aged *danseuse* did not answer. Taking Pont-de-Veyle by the hand, all of a sudden, she said in rising, "Monsieur, follow me." He obeyed with some surprise. She conducted him to her bedchamber; it was like a basket of odds and ends; it looked like a linendraper's shop in confusion; it was all disorder; it was quite evident that the dogs were at home there. Mademoiselle de Camargo went to a little rosewood chest of drawers, covered with specimens of Saxony porcelain, more or less chipped and broken. She

opened a little ebony box, exposing its contents to the eyes of Pont-de-Veyle. "Do you see?" said she, with a sigh. Pont-de-Veyle saw a torn letter, the dry bouquet of half a century, the kind of flowers of which it was composed could hardly be recognised. —"Well?" asked Pont-de-Veyle.—"Well, do you understand?"—"Not at all."—"Look at that portrait." —She pointed with her finger to a wretched portrait in oils, covered with dust and spider's web.—"I begin to understand."—"Yes," said she, "that is his portrait. As for myself, I never look at it. The one here," striking her breast, "is more like. A portrait is a good thing for those who have no time for memory."

Pont-de-Veyle looked in turn with much interest at the letter, the faded bouquet, and the wretched portrait.—"Have you ever met this person?"—"Never." —"Let us return, then."—"No; I beg let me hear the story."—"Is it not enough to have seen his portrait? You can now settle your dispute with a word, since you know whether he whom I loved the most resembles your friend who had taken so much wine." —"He does not resemble him the least in the world."—"Well, that is all: I forgive your visit. Farewell! When you breakfast with your friends, you can take up my defence somewhat. You can tell those libertines without pity, that I have saved myself by my heart, if we can be saved that way....Yes, yes; it is my plank of safety, in the wreck!"

Saying these words, Mademoiselle de Camargo approached the door of the saloon. Pont-de-Veyle followed her, carrying the ebony box.—"Gentlemen," said he to his merry friends, "our drunken toper was a coxcomb; I have seen the portrait of the best-beloved of the goddess of this mansion; now you must join your prayers to mine, to prevail upon Mademoiselle de Camargo to relate to us the romance of her heart; I only know the preface, which is melancholy and interesting; I have seen a letter, a bouquet, and a portrait."—"I will not tell you a word," muttered she; "women are charged with not being able to keep a secret; there is, however, more than one that they never tell. A love-secret is a rose which embalms our hearts; if it is told, the rose loses its perfume. I who address you," said Mademoiselle de Camargo, in brightening up, "I have only kept my love in all its freshness by keeping it all to myself. There were only La Carton and that old rogue Fontenelle who ever got hold of my secret. Fontenelle was in the habit of dining frequently with me; one day, finding me in tears, he was so surprised, he who never wept himself, from philosophy doubtless, that he tormented me for more than an hour for a solution of the enigma. He was almost like a woman; he drew from me, by his cat-like worrying, the history of my love. Would you believe it? I hoped to touch his heart, but it was like speaking to the deaf. After having listened to the end without saying a word, he muttered

with his little weak voice, '*It is pretty!*' La Carton, however, wept with me. It is worth being a poet and a philosopher in order not to understand such histories."

Mademoiselle de Camargo was silent; a deep silence followed, and every look was upon her.—"Speak, speak! we are all attention," said Helvetius, "we are more worthy of hearing your story than the old philosopher, who loved no one but himself."—"After all," she replied, carried away by the delight of her remembrance, "it will be spending a happy hour; I speak of myself, and as for happy or unhappy hours, not many more are to pass during my life, for I feel that I am passing away. But I do not know how to begin; a fire flashes before my eyes; I cannot see, I am so overcome. To begin: I was twenty....But I shall never have the courage to read my history aloud before so many people."—"Fancy, Mademoiselle de Camargo," said Helvetius, "that you are reading a romance."—"Well, then," said she, "I will begin without ceremony."

"I was twenty years old. You are all aware, for the adventure caused a great deal of scandal, you all know how the Count de Melun carried me off one morning along with my sister Sophy. This little madcap, who had a great deal of imagination, having discovered me reading a letter of the count's, in which he spoke of his design, she swore upon her thirteen years that he must carry her off too. I was far from

conceding any such claim. It is always taken for granted that children know nothing; but at the opera, and in love, there are no children. The Count de Melun, by means of a bribe, had gained over the chambermaid. I was very culpable; I knew all, and had not informed my father. But my father wearied me somewhat; he preached in the desert; that is to say, he preached to me about virtue. He was always talking to me about our noble descent, of our cousin who was a cardinal, of our uncle who was a grand Inquisitor. Vanity of vanities! all was vanity with him, while with me all was love. I did not trouble myself about being of an illustrious family; I was handsome, I was worshipped, and, what was still better, I was young.

"In the middle of the night I heard my door open; it was the Count de Melun. I was not asleep, I was expecting him. It is not every woman who would like it that is run away with. I was going to be run away with.

"Love is not only charming in itself, it is so also from its romance. A passion without adventure is like a mistress without caprice. I was seated upon my bed. 'Is it you, Jacqueline?' I said, affecting fright.—'It is I,' said the count, falling upon his knees.—'You, sir! your letter was not a joke, then?' —'My horses are at hand; there is no time to lose; leave this sad prison: my hotel, my fortune, my heart, all are at your service.' At that moment a light

appeared at the door. 'My father!' I cried, with affright, as I concealed myself behind the bed-curtains. 'All is lost,' muttered the count. It was Sophie. I recognised her light step. She approached with the light in her hand, and in silence, towards the count. 'My sister,' said she, with some degree of excitement, but without losing her presence of mind, 'here I am, all ready.' I did not understand; I looked at her with surprise; she was all dressed from head to foot. 'What are you saying? You are mad.' —'Not by any means; I want to be run away with, like yourself.' The Count de Melun could not help laughing. 'Mademoiselle,' he said to her, 'you forget your dolls and toys.'—'Sir,' replied she, with dignity, 'I am thirteen years old. It was not yesterday that I made my début at the opera; I take a part on the stage in the ravishment of Psyche.'—'Good,' says the count, 'we will carry you off too.' 'It is as well,' whispered the count in my ear; 'this is the only way of getting rid of her.'

"I was very much put out by this contretemps, which gave a new complication to our adventure. My father might forgive my being carried off, but Sophie! I tried to dissuade her from her mad enterprise. I offered her my ornaments; she would not listen to reason. She declared, that if she was not carried off with me she would inform against us, and thus prevent the adventure. 'Do not oppose her,' said the count; 'with such a tendency she will

be sure to be carried off, sooner or later.'—' Well, let us depart together.' The chambermaid, who had approached with the stealthy, quiet step of a cat, told us to hurry, for she was afraid that the noise of the horses, that were pawing the ground near by, would awaken Monsieur de Camargo. We were off; the carriage drove us to the count's hotel, rue de la Culture-Saint-Gervais. Sophie laughed and sang. In the morning I wrote to the manager of the opera, that by the advice of my physician it was impossible for me to appear for three weeks. To tell you the truth, gentlemen, in a week's time I went myself to inform the manager that I would dance that evening. This, you perceive, is not very flattering to the Count de Melun; but there are so few men in this world who are sufficiently interesting for a week together. I loved the count, doubtless, but I wanted to breathe a little without him. I desired the excitement of the theatre. I opened my window, constantly, as if I would fly out of it.

" As soon as I appeared at the opera my father followed my track, and discovered the retreat of his daughters. One evening behind the scenes, he went straight to the count, and insulted him. The count answered him, with great deference, that he would avoid the chance of taking the life of a gallant gentleman who had given birth to such a daughter as I was. My father did his best to prove and establish his sixteen quarterings, the count was not willing to fight him.

It was about that time that my father presented his famous petition to the Cardinal de Fleury: 'Your petitioner would state to the Lord Cardinal, that the Count de Melun, having carried off his two daughters in the night, between the 10th and 11th of the month of May, 1728, holds them imprisoned in his hotel, rue de la Culture-Saint-Gervais. Your petitioner having to do with a person of rank, is obliged to have recourse to his Majesty's ministers; he hopes, through the goodness of the King, justice will be done him, and that the Count de Melun will be commanded to espouse the elder daughter of your petitioner, and endow the younger.'

"A father could not have done better. The Cardinal de Fleury amused himself a good deal with the petition, and recommended me, one day that we were supping together, for full penance, to make over to my father my salary at the opera. But I find I am not getting on with my story. But what would you have? The beginning is always where we dwell with the greatest pleasure. I had been living in the count's hotel a year; Sophie had returned to my father's house, where she did not remain long; but it is not her history that I am relating. One morning a cousin of the count arrived at the hotel in a great bustle; he was about spending a season in Paris, in all the wildness of youth. He took us by surprise at breakfast; he took his seat at table, without ceremony, on the invitation of the count.

" In the beginning he did not strike my fancy; I thought him somewhat of a braggadocio. He cultivated his mustachios with great care (the finest mustachios in the world), and spoke quite often enough of his prowess in battle. Some visitor interrupting us, the count went into his library, and left us together, *tête-à-tête*. Monsieur de Marteille's voice, until then proud and haughty in its tone, softened a little. He had at first looked at me with the eye of a soldier—he now looked at me with the eye of a pupil.—' Excuse, madame,' said he, with some emotion, ' my rude soldier-like bearing; I know nothing of fine manners; I have never passed through the school of gallantry. Do not be offended at anything I may say.'—' Why, sir,' said I, smiling, ' you do not say anything at all.'—' Ah, if I knew how to speak! but, in truth, I would feel more at home before a whole army than I do before your beautiful eyes. The count is very happy in having such a beautiful enemy to contend with.'—While speaking thus, he looked at me with a supplicating tenderness which contrasted singularly with his look of the hero. I do not know what my eyes answered him. The count then came in, and the conversation took another turn.

" Monsieur de Marteille accepted the earnest invitation of his cousin to stay at his hotel. He went out; I did not see him again till evening. He did not know who I was; the Count called me Marianne, and, unintentionally, perhaps, he had not spoken a

word to his cousin about the opera, or my grace and skill as a dancer. At supper, Monsieur de Marteille had no longer the same frank gaiety of the morning; a slight uneasiness passed like a cloud over his brow; more than once I caught his melancholy glance.—'Cheer up your cousin,' I said to the count.—'I know what he wants,' answered Monsieur de Melun: 'I will take him to-morrow to the opera. You will see that in that irreligious place he will find his good humour again.'—I felt jealous, without asking myself why.

"Next day the *Triumph of Bacchus* was played. I appeared as Ariadne, all covered with vine-leaves and flowers. I never danced so badly. I had recognised Monsieur de Marteille among the gentlemen of the court. He looked at me with a serious air. I had hoped to have had an opportunity to speak with him before the end of the ballet, but he had already gone. I was offended at his abrupt departure.—'How!' said I to myself; 'he sees me dance, and this is the way he makes me his compliments.'—Next morning he breakfasted with us; he did not say a word about the evening; finally, not being able to resist my impatience, 'Well, Monsieur de Marteille,' said I to him, somewhat harshly, 'you left early last night; it was hardly polite of you.'—'Ah! when you were to dance no more?' said he with a sigh. This was the first time that I was ever spoken to thus. Fearing that he had said too much, and in order to divert Monsieur de Melun, who observed him with a look of surprise,

he began to speak of a little singer of no great moment, who had a voice of some freshness.

" In the afternoon, the count, detained at home for some reason or other, begged his cousin to accompany me in a ride to the woods. He was to join us on horseback. The idea of this ride made my heart beat violently. It was the first time that I had listened with pleasure to the beatings of my heart.

" We started on a fine summer's day. Everything was like a holiday: the sky, the houses, the trees, the horses, and the people. A veil had fallen from my eyes. For some minutes we remained in the deepest silence; not knowing what to do, I amused myself by making a diamond that I wore glisten in the rays of the sun that entered the carriage. Monsieur de Marteille caught hold of my hand. We both said not a word the whole time. I tried to disengage my hand; he held it the harder. I blushed; he turned pale. A jolt of the carriage occurred very opportunely to relieve us from our embarrassment; the jolt had lifted me from my seat; it made me fall upon his bosom.—' Monsieur,' said I, starting.—' Ah, madame, if you knew how I love you!'—He said this with a tenderness beyond expression; it was love itself that spoke! I had no longer the strength to get angry. He took my hand again and devoured it with kisses. He did not say another word; I tried to speak, but did not know what to say myself. From time to time our looks met each other; it was then that we were

eloquent. Such eternal pledges, such promises of happiness!

"Notwithstanding, we arrived at the woods. All of a sudden, as if seized with a new idea, he put his head out of the window, and said something to the coachman. I understood, by the answer of La Violette, the coachman, that he was not willing to obey; but Monsieur de Marteille having alluded to a caning and fifty pistoles, the coachman made no further objections. I did not understand very well what he was about. After an hour's rapid travelling, as I was looking with some anxiety as to where we were, he tried to divert me by telling me some episodes of his life. Although I did not listen very intelligently to what he said, I heard enough to find out that I was the first woman he had ever loved. They all say so, but he told the truth, for he spoke with his eyes and his heart. I soon found out that we were no longer on our right road; but observe how far the feebleness of a woman in love will go: I had not the courage to ask him why he had changed our route. We crossed the Seine in a boat between Sèvres and St. Cloud; we regained the woods, and after an hour's ride through them, we reached an iron park-gate, at the extremity of the village of Velaisy.

"Monsieur de Marteille had counted without his host. He expected not to have found a soul in his brother's château, but, since the evening before, his brother had returned from a journey to the coast of

France. Seeing that the château was inhabited, Monsieur de Marteille begged me to wait a little in the carriage. As soon as he had gone, the coachman came to the door.—'Well, madame, we breathe at last! my opinion is that we should make our escape. Depend upon the word of La Violette, we shall be in less than two hours at the hotel.'—'La Violette,' said I, 'open the door.'—I ran a great risk. La Violette obeyed.—'Now,' said I to him, when I had alighted upon the ground, 'you may go!'—He looked at me with the eye of an old philosopher, mounted his box, and snapped his whip; but he had hardly started when he thought it better to return.—'I will not return without madame, for if I return alone, I shall be sure of a good beating, and of being discharged.'—'Indeed, La Violette; as you please.'—At that moment I saw the count returning.—'It is all for the best,' he cried out, in the distance; 'my brother has only two days to spend in Paris: he has stopped here to give his orders; he wishes, at all hazards, to see Camargo dance! I told him that she was to appear this evening. He will leave in a moment. You must wait in the park till he is gone. I will return to him, for I must take my leave of him, and wish him a pleasant journey.'

"An hour afterward we were installed in the château. La Violette remained, at our order, with his carriage and horses. In the evening there was great excitement at the opera. It was solemnly announced to the public that Mademoiselle de Camargo had been

carried off! The Count de Melun, surprised at not finding us in the woods, had gone to the theatre. He was hissed; he swore revenge. He sought everywhere; he found neither his horses, nor his carriage, nor his mistress. For three months the opera was in mourning! Thirty bailiffs were on my track; but we made so little noise in our little château, hid away in the woods, that we were never discovered."

Mademoiselle de Camargo became pale: she was silent, and looked at her listeners as if she would say by her looks that had been lighted up at that celestial flame which had passed over her life: "Oh, how we loved each other during those three months!"

She continued as follows: "That season has filled a greater space in my life than all the rest of my days. When I think of the past, it is there where my thoughts travel at once. How relate to you the particulars of our happiness? When destiny protects us, happiness is composed of a thousand charming nothings that the hearts of others cannot understand. During those three months I was entirely happy; I wished to live for ever in this charming retreat for him that I loved a thousand times more than myself. I wished to abandon the opera, that opera that the Count de Melun could not make me forget for a week!

"Monsieur de Marteille possessed all the attraction of a real passion; he loved me with a charming simplicity; he put in play, without designing it, all the seductions of love. What tender words! what impas-

sioned looks! what enticing conversation! Each day was a holyday, each hour a rapture. I had no time to think of the morrow.

"Our days were spent in walks, in the shade of the woods, in the thousand windings of the park. In the evening I played the harpsichord, and I sang. It often occurred that I danced, danced for him. In the middle of a dance that would have excited a furor at the opera, I fell at his feet completely overcome; he raised me up, pressed me to his heart, and forgave me for having danced. I always hear his beautiful voice, which was like music, but such music as I dream of, and not such as Rameau has composed . . . . But now I am speaking without knowing what I say."

Mademoiselle de Camargo turned towards Pont-de-Veyle. "Monsieur," said she, "open that box or rather hand it to me." She took the box, opened it, and took the bouquet from it. "But above all, gentlemen, I must explain to you why I have preserved this bouquet." While saying this, she attempted to smell the vanished odour of the bouquet.

"One morning," she resumed, "Monsieur de Marteille awoke me early.—'Farewell!' he said, pale and trembling.—'What are you saying?' cried I with affright.—'Alas,' replied he, embracing me, 'I did not wish to tell you before, but for a fortnight I have had orders to leave. Hostilities are to be resumed in the Low Countries; I have no longer a single hour either for you or for me; I have over forty leagues to travel

to day.'—'Oh, my God, what will become of me?' said I, weeping. 'I will follow you.'—'But, my dear Marianne, I shall return.'—'You will return in an age! Go, cruel one, I shall be dead when you return.'

"An hour was spent in taking leave and in tears; he was obliged to go; he went.

"I returned to weep in that retreat, that was so delightful the evening before. Two days after his departure, he wrote me a very tender letter, in which he told me that, on the next day, he would have the consolation of engaging in battle. 'I hope,' added he, 'that the campaign will not be a long one; some days of hard fighting, and then I return to your feet.' What more shall I tell you? He wrote me once again."

Mademoiselle de Camargo unfolded slowly the torn letter. "Here is the second letter:—

'*Oct.* 17.

"'No, I shall not return, my dear; I am going to die, but without fear, without reproach. Oh! if you were here, Marianne! What madness, in an hospital where all of us, all, be we what we may, are disfigured with wounds and dying! What an idea to dash ahead in the fight, when I only thought of seeing you again. As soon as I was wounded, I asked the surgeon if I should live long enough to reach Paris: "You have but an hour," he answered me pitilessly . . . They brought me here with the others. In a word, we should learn to resign ourselves to what comes from Heaven. I die content with having loved you; console yourself,

return to the opera. I am not jealous of those who shall succeed me, for will they love you as I have done? Farewell, Mariaune; death approaches, and death never waits; I thank it for having left me sufficient time to bid you farewell. Now, it will be I who will wait for you.

"'Farewell, farewell; I press you to my heart which ceases to beat.'"

After having wiped her eyes, Mademoiselle de Camargo continued as follows: "Shall I describe to you all my sorrows, all my tears, all my anguish? Alas! as he had said, I returned to the opera. I did not forget Monsieur de Marteille, in the tempest of my folly. Others have loved me. I have loved no one but Monsieur de Marteille: his memory has beamed upon my life like a blessing from heaven. When I reappeared at the opera, I was seen attending mass; I was laughed at for my devotion. They did not understand, philosophers as they were, that I prayed in consequence of those words of Monsieur de Marteille: 'Now it will be I who will wait for you.'

"When I left the château, I plucked a bouquet in the park, thinking that I was plucking the flowers that had bloomed for him; I brought away this bouquet, along with the portrait that you see there. I had vowed, in leaving our dear retreat, to go every year, at the same season, to gather a bouquet in the park. Will you believe it? I never went there again!"

Mademoiselle de Camargo thus finished her history. "Well, my dear philosopher," said Helvetius to Duclos, in descending the steps, "you have just read a book that is somewhat curious."—"A bad book," answered Duclos, "but such books are always interesting."

In April, 1770, the news spread that Mademoiselle de Camargo had just died a good catholic. "This created a great surprise," says a journal of the day, "in the republic of letters, for she was supposed to have been dead twenty years." Her last admirer and her last friend, to whom she had bequeathed her dogs and her cats, had caused her body to be interred with a magnificence unexampled at the opera. "All the world," says Grimm, "admired that white pall, the symbol of chastity, that all unmarried persons are entitled to in their funeral ceremony."

MADEMOISELLE GUIMARD.

(A GODDESS OF THE OPERA.)

To the storyteller the eighteenth century is inexhaustible. One who merely stops at the surface, judges it at a single glance—a superannuated mythology in the arts, licentious amours in the world of fashion, golden days at court; but one who descends a little way into the gloom of that yet palpitating past, who resolutely shakes the dust from the volumes of a century, who studies at Versailles and elsewhere the faces of Louis XV.'s court, who seeks to read into those hearts hidden beneath the roses of the bodice—he will discover a whole comedy *in a hundred various acts*, played in open day, in a thousand curious scenes—the eternal comedy of life, but more artlessly mad than ever. Thus far, I have endeavoured to paint the most intelligent of the group—those who exhibit the radiance of poetry in every view; I have yet more than one study to make, and since I have spoken of the theatre, may I not sketch the profiles of some of those actresses, who, from Camargo to Guimard, form, as the Gentil-Bernard said, a garland of love? We shall see that, far from being misplaced in the human comedy, the jesters held there, as in our own

days, the best places in point of notoriety and wealth. At the time that Boissy was dying of misery (not like Malfilâtre, who, at least, died alone,) but with his wife and children, the actress who played his pieces was spattering twenty poets with her coaches. At the time when Grétry, Lantara and Jean-Jacques Rousseau were living on condition of dining out, Mademoiselle Guimard had a palace, and gave a supper to a prince and a duke; I need not add that the musician, the companion of her glory at the opera, was not invited to the supper. But all this false notoriety and false éclat at last gave place to a worthier glory when death came to assign every one his place. To-day, the poet or musician still charms us, but who remembers the dancer or singer that spattered him? A case in point. It is not a month since Mademoiselle Thévenin (who at this day knows Mademoiselle Thévenin, the rival of Duthé?) died at Fontainebleau, at the age of ninety-two. A crowd of noble lords and bankers had ruined themselves for her at the will of her caprice. She died a millionnaire and a miser, without thinking of Heaven or the poor. She had no heir, and she made no will, as if the bare idea of giving away after her death would have cost her too much. Mademoiselle Thévenin left an income of fifty thousand livres to the state. To be sure, the state is the chief pauper in the kingdom.

Heaven forbid that I should ever linger over such a portrait. If I have brought forward that horrible

death, it is to avenge in broad day the poor whom that woman disinherited during her life and after her death. I choose my models better. More than one lovely face may be detached from the gallery of the opera. By the side of Mademoiselle Thévenin, who was a miser, we find Mademoiselle Guimard, who was a prodigal.

Mademoiselle Guimard played a great part during her life, at the opera, in the city, and at court. At first she danced, then it was love, love, always love. A hundred Marquises ruined themselves for her; but, what will seem much more surprising, she almost ruined a farmer of the revenue. A farmer of the revenue! You know they were all as rich as a hundred Marquises. I will not tell you the names of her lovers, I should not find time and space: know only that she counted Dukes and Princes among the most persevering: for instance, the Duke d'Orléans and the Prince de Soubise. The latter, especially, was very obstinate; he persisted in giving her a great deal of money. Guimard was prevailed upon to pocket, on various occasions, an income of from three to four hundred thousand francs, on condition of making a good use of it. Sometimes she built a palace, sometimes she gave large alms to the poor of her neighbourhood. Grimm gives an account of one of her charities. During the severe cold of 1768, she took some money, without counting it—nearly eight thousand francs; she set out all alone, without saying

anything to any one, mounted into the garrets in her neighbourhood, found out all those who were suffering from the rigour of the season, and gave to every destitute family bread enough to live on for a year. Was not that the kindly dew of which the Scripture speaks? That was something to ennoble her pirouettes. Moved to tears at this good deed, Marmontel addressed a long epistle to the dancer; we should mention that he often dined at Mademoiselle Guimard's. This action made considerable noise; a preacher spoke of it in his sermon, not failing to bring forward, in connection with the subject, the sublime picture of the penitent Magdalen. "It is not yet the penitent Magdalen!" he exclaimed; "but it is even now the charitable Magdalen! The hand that performs such acts of charity will not be disregarded by Saint Peter, when it knocks at the gate of Paradise." Grimm, seeing everybody affected, said in his journal, "For my part, I desire to play here the part of that good village curate, who, when he had preached to his rustic congregation on the passion of our Lord, and saw them all weeping at the excess of his sufferings, was loath to send them home so afflicted, and said to them, 'My children, do not weep so much, for, perhaps, all this is not true!'" The story is true in every particular, the more so that Guimard never said a word about it; it was the police who bore witness to all her acts of kindness. Besides, Grimm was one of Guimard's distant admirers. "I have always loved her tenderly,"

he wrote to the King of Prussia. "They say that the sound of her voice is rough and harsh: to my ears it is a grievous wrong; but, as I have never heard her speak, that defect has not been able to diminish my passion for her."

We may reasonably be astonished at this dancer's wonderful conquests, but on the subject of love we need be astonished at nothing. As soon as we attempt to reason upon it we are all astray. Not only was Guimard not beautiful, but she was not even pretty. It must be confessed that she had that indefinable something which seduces, without the mind or heart knowing why. Love is not blind for nothing, and Mademoiselle Guimard possessed, in a greater degree than any other of her class, the art of putting a bandage over the eyes that looked at her. She was thin for a dancer—so much so that her charitable companions surnamed her *the spider*, and truly her dancing reminded one rather of the skips of a daddy long-legs. Apart from the skips, she excelled in the rigadoon, the tambourine dance, the *loure*, in all that was called the high style. More than once she created a furor in the *gargouillade;* she was wonderful in pirouettes, but her real triumph was in the fancy dance, and it was for her that the *Caprices de Galathée* was composed. Her most marked feature was her affectation; she danced as Sterne wrote: so Sterne, who saw her during his travels in France, declared her the most false, the loosest, the most

mannered of dancers. Happily for her, every one was not of Sterne's opinion. Her admirers said in so many words, "She is voluptuousness personified: she unites the three Graces in her own person." Mademoiselle Arnould, who was listened to as an oracle in that perverted world, rather counterbalanced these eulogiums by her sarcasms. M. de Jarente, bishop more or less of a diocese where he never showed himself, was in love with Mademoiselle Guimard. Thanks to him, she had, according to his expression, entered into orders, and she held the *benefice leaf*. Hence that jest of Mademoiselle Arnould's, "I can't conceive how that little silkworm is so thin, she feeds on so rich a leaf." Mademoiselle Guimard replied to this spiteful saying by an abusive letter, in which Sophie Arnould was accused of having committed the seven capital sins seven times a day. Sophie Arnould replied with these three words, "I double you."

Guimard, however, laughed gaily at compliments or sarcasms. Her thoughts were far more occupied with changing a carriage, building a palace, or doing an act of charity. All the journals of the time talked of her house, called the *Temple of Terpsichore*. Ancient history speaks of the courtesan Rhodope, who built one of the most famous pyramids of Egypt with the money obtained from her lovers; Guimard built a palace in the Chaussée-d'Antin, where more treasures were swallowed up than would have sufficed to build twenty pyramids. The temple of Terpsichore con-

tained, besides the large and small apartments of the goddess, a summer-garden, and a winter-garden, a library of bad books, a gallery of pictures on subjects of gallantry, and a theatre where the king's players in ordinary, and all the talent of the strolling companies, were delighted to act. There was also a Paphian temple, and there was always somebody at the door. "A prohibition from the gentlemen of the chamber was necessary," said a journal, "to prevent the leading actors of the French and Italian theatres from playing at Mademoiselle Guimard's; because, afterward, they took their repose and did not play for the public." The dancer, accustomed as she was to queenly command, braved the prohibition; she was threatened with the royal indignation, but she replied to the threat by giving at her house the parody of a court fête. Although a king of France might then know how to squander money by the handful, the parody was more brilliant than the fête itself. Shows, dances, feasting, follies of every age and country, nothing was wanting, scandal least of all.

Would it be believed? The queen, Marie-Antoinette, who, like so many others, had touched with her lips the fatal cup with which that giddy, pirouetting, witty, and fickle age was intoxicating itself, called Guimard, without ceremony and without thinking twice on the matter, to her toilet councils. It usually happened that Guimard was president of the council, even in the presence of the lady of honour, the Princess

de Chimay, the lady of the bedchamber, the Countess d'Ossun, and the lady of the palace, the Marchioness de la Roche-Aymon. The superintendent herself, the chief of the council, as she was then called, had not a word to say when Guimard appeared at Versailles. The queen had a blind confidence in the dancer's good taste. It was Mademoiselle Guimard here, Mademoiselle Guimard there: is my hair well dressed? do these roses look well in my bodice? The dancer replied without hesitation, pretty much as if she was speaking to Sophie Arnould; she knew that etiquette was banished from the court of France, after Madame Dubarry passed over the throne. Besides, she treated with the queen almost like one power with another. Had not all the lords who fluttered at court pirouetted at her house? Did the luxury of the Trianon equal that of the temple of Terpsichore? Had the queen, like the dancer (dancer did I say?—goddess of the dance), a winter-garden where the rarest plants were blooming?

Guimard was not ignorant of the price the queen set upon her counsels. So, one day that she was going to For-l'Evêque, she said to her *lady of honour*: "Do not cry, Gothon; I have written to the queen, that I had discovered a new style of dressing the hair; I shall be free before this evening."

A journal of the time, speaking of Guimard's hotel, says, that Love defrayed the expense, and Luxury drew the plan. "Never," adds this journal, "had those

divinities in Greece a temple more worthy of their worship."—The dancer had her painter in ordinary; that painter was Fragonard. It was determined between the goddess and the artist, that the saloon should be made up entirely of painting, panels, ceiling, doors, and mirrors. Fragonard took his freshest and most seductive palette, his lightest and most graceful pencil. After two years' labour, he was not yet at the end of this work of gallantry; but he had made his way into the heart of Guimard; that, to be sure, was a reason why he should not finish. Wishing to paint Terpsichore in every aspect, and in all her attributes, he had often asked an audience of the dancer, who always sat with the best grace in the world.—"Well, Fragonard, what are we going to paint to-day?"—"Your smile, your lips, all the graces of your mouth."—"Flatterer!"—"Come, let us lose no time; a smile, if you please."—"Faith, I am not at all in the vein to-day."—"Nevertheless, we must come to the point."—"Do you think a person can smile without a cause?"—"When you dance the gargouillade, it seems to me—"—"That is quite another affair; at the opera I am following my trade: I am quite sure that my pretty airs are not lost."—"Who knows, if they would be lost here?"—"You have given me an idea; well, make me smile; that is your business."—"Suppose I tell you some scandal about Sophie Arnould?"—"Say on."—"No; that is not the smile I want, for it is the voluptuous mouth I

wish to paint just now."—" I suppose I have not got the virtuous mouth."

History has not recorded the rest of this conversation between the painter and the dancer. History always takes a long leap over the critical moments. All that I can say is, that the next day Fragonard was desperately in love, and hoped to have a good sitting; but the next day a prince, a duke, a marquis, a farmer of the revenue, whom you will, came to ask an audience of Guimard. The painter had the folly to be jealous; he imagined he had claims upon that fickle heart. Not only was he jealous, but, to make the matter supremely ridiculous, he took a notion to tell the dancer so.—" Jealous!" she exclaimed, "jealous of me! really, that is too funny; you will make me die of laughing. In love—that is very well; but jealous! what folly!"—" Yes, I am jealous," said the painter in a pet; " I love you, and you shall love me, were it only for a week."—" A week! you do not know what you say; none of my lovers ever put forward such a pretension. A week! we might as well be married. You wanted a smile (to make a pretty portrait); did I not smile?"—" Yes, but a smile is not enough: I require—"

Guimard rose haughtily; assumed her grand queenly airs, and said to her painter in ordinary, " You require! That word is not known here; it is not admitted into my dictionary. You think, perhaps, you are dealing with a common figurante of the opera.

I advise you, Monsieur Fragonard, to gather up your brushes, and go and paint elsewhere. A pleasant journey to you! As for the money I owe you, you can talk to my steward about it."—"Farewell, Madame La Deese," said the painter, with dignity. He took his hat, and bowed with an air of mockery. "Mirth and sport attend you; be ever fresh and smiling. But tell me, who will make that portrait smile?"—"Thank Heaven! Monsieur Fragonard, I am not at the end of my smiles."—"He laughs well who laughs the last."

He departed quite convinced that Guimard would recall him; for who would she find, unless it were Greuze, to finish that portrait worthily? Now, Greuze had quite different matters to attend to. The next day Fragonard went to the window twenty times, always thinking that he heard the approach of the dancer's carriage. She did not recall him. The noise of his "*disgrace*" was hardly spread abroad, before three or four painters presented themselves to finish the saloon, if not the portrait. The dancer chose the most delicate and coquettish pencil; it was another pupil of Boucher, who created loves and scattered roses as if by enchantment. Perhaps he had not all the grace of Fragonard, but the dancer, accustomed to operatic decorations, did not take a close view of those matters. She was so well contented with her new painter, that she commanded him to finish the portrait.—"I shall never dare to ask you to sit for the

smile."—"Take courage."—The young painter did not take the smile for her, as Fragonard had done; he took it for the portrait; he succeeded, by some means, in painting that mouth that had been the theme of all the madrigalists of the time.

But Fragonard, whose passion was now only a repressed anger, did not consider himself beaten. One day, more and more overcome by this anger, he ventured as far as the temple of Terpsichore, resolved to brave everything, even the haughty dancer herself. As he was going to enter, he saw the carriage of the goddess come out. He entered without ceremony; the attendants, left at liberty, had abandoned their posts, to chat in the neighbourhood or in the pantry. Fragonard, who knew the road well, called no one to guide his steps in that labyrinth of love where every one found a thread to untwist. He reached the saloon without meeting a soul. The young painter had just stepped into the garden, which was a very garden of Armida; and as he re-entered the house he was disagreeably struck by the pretty smile of the portrait, which was still upon the easel.—"Really, she is charming! I should not have caught more grace and voluptuousness myself."

He looked at it with some surprise; the portrait seemed to look him in theface with an air of mockery. He walked for awhile in the saloon, a prey to a thousand ideas of vengeance. There was a palette and brushes in the room; his revenge is at hand. With

three or four strokes of the brush he effaces the smile; he hits upon the expression of wrath and fury without injuring the resemblance of the portrait. Never was sacrilege more suddenly consummated. Hardly had he given it the final touch, and was departing, better pleased than if he had produced a masterpiece, when he stopped in terror; he hears the sound of a carriage; it is Guimard returning with two lovers and a female friend, the latter something unusual. The dancer, delighted with her portrait, wished to judge of the delight of others. She entered the saloon in triumph; Fragonard, in despair, barely had time to crouch behind the easel.

"Look, prince! look how that portrait—" The dancer turned pale.—"Charming!" said the Prince de Soubise, who had not yet seen it.—"Stay!" said Guimard, "am I mad? can't I see clear?"—"A very good likeness, really, my dear friend," said Sophie Arnould.—"But don't you see? it is all very well for you; you would pay a compliment to the three Fates. That little dauber has spoiled all. Was any one ever disfigured like that?"—"What does all this mean?" asked the Marquis de Bièvres.—"I do not understand it at all. Just now I was smiling with all the grace in the world, but now—"—"But, my dear," said Sophie Arnould, "I assure you, you are very like your portrait; it is the same wrath and the same passion; just look in the glass! Who knows but this portrait has the power to change its countenance,

like the original?"—"The best of it is," said the marquis, kissing the dancer's hand, "that it is the only portrait like the original that I ever saw in my life. Look if it has not the appearance of bursting with rage. I have more than once had the distinguished advantage of seeing you in that line of your talents. Do not tell me of a portrait that smiles; we smile to every one; the smile is the bluntest of the arrows of love; but we grant to very few the favour of seeing us in a passion."

History does not tell us whether the painter retouched the portrait.*

You have seen Guimard at court and in her palace. Would you like to see her at Longchamps the 29th of March, 1775? It happened that on that day of the gloomy passion-week there was the loveliest spring sunshine. All the magnificence of Versailles and Paris was splendidly spread out on the promenade;

* This adventure has had a second edition. Girodet had painted the portrait of Mademoiselle Lange, another Guimard, rather less brilliant. The actress refused the portrait, saying it was not like her.—"No one would ever recognise me in that ugly face."—"Very well, mademoiselle, I shall find a way to make you recognised."—The angry painter set to work. He painted Mademoiselle Lange as Danae; but, instead of a shower of gold, it was a shower of crown-pieces that besprinkled the boudoir of this second Danae. In one corner a turkey was strutting.—"Is it like you this time?" said the painter, who had greatly improved upon his model.—"Very like," said the actress, who did not understand the allegories at all. She hung the portrait up in her parlour, and, like Guimard, went to ask the opinion of her friends.—"Very like," exclaimed the lively company, bursting with laughter.

but among all the carriages the most admired was Guimard's, drawn by four horses; it was less a carriage than a car, "worthy," says a journal, "of containing the exquisite graces of the modern Terpsichore." —Nothing was wanting to that equipage, neither the most mettled and spirited horses, nor the prettiest paintings, nor the most enthusiastic adorers; nothing was wanting, not even a coat-of-arms. In the middle of the scutcheon was seen a golden mark, whence issued a mistletoe; the Graces acted as supporters, and the Loves crowned the shield.—"Everything is ingenious in that emblem," adds the journal.

It was not enough for Mademoiselle Guimard to have a temple at Paris; the queen had pleasure houses; the goddess of the opera built a pleasure-house at Pantin. Hear Bachaumont: "*December 12th*, 1775. There is much talk of the magnificent spectacles given at her superb mansion at Pantin, by Mademoiselle Guimard, so renowned for the elegance of her taste, her unparalleled luxury, and the philosophers, wits, and people of talent, of every class, who compose her court, and make it the admiration of the age. Our good authors dispute with one another the privilege of being acted at her theatre, and for her amusement; and our celebrated actors, the privilege of playing to please her. The Prince de Soubise is always of the number of spectators. No one is admitted to these entertainments until after he has been

admitted to court. The entertainments of Nero were not equal to these."

Mademoiselle Guimard was celebrated, among other reasons, for her suppers, which were the most wonderful in Paris. She gave three a week, the first composed of the greatest lords of the court; the second of poets, artists, and *savants*, who had eaten a bad supper the night before at Madame Geoffrin's; the third was not a supper, but an orgy composed of actresses of every sort, and people of every quality. Thus on Tuesday this dancer queened it unceremoniously among the noblest names of France; on Thursday she had a court of *savants*, who talked to her of Sappho and Ninon; of artists who painted her in every style (Boucher metamorphosed her into a shepherdess, and Fragonard into Diana the huntress); of poets like Dorat and Marmontel, who sang her graces with the same voice that they sang the praises of the queen. On Saturday she constituted herself the goddess of pleasure, and presided at the banquet of folly.

But *the destinies and the billows are changeable.* Six months after these wonders, Bachaumont inscribes on his tablets: "Mademoiselle Guimard, whose talents for dancing are the delight of Paris, is on the eve of bankruptcy; she has suspended—her entertainments." The Prince de Soubise having cause to complain of her, because she had three or four more lovers than

usual, had just stopped her pension of a thousand crowns a week, which he had paid her for a long time. "And only to think," said the celebrated dancer, "that I want but four hundred thousand livres to appease a few of my creditors!" Bachaumont thus ends his page upon this great event, which occupied all Paris: "It is hoped that some English lord or German baron will come to the assistance of Terpsichore. A new shame for the French, if a stranger sets them that example!"

We are not at the end of the story. Mademoiselle Guimard could not console herself for the departure of the Prince de Soubise; in her grief she complained to the men who fluttered about her charms at the opera. She had not to complain long. She said one evening: "If I only had a hundred thousand livres to-morrow!" The next day a magnificent carriage, drawn by four horses, stops at her hotel; an unknown personage presents himself before the sovereign. "Mademoiselle, the hundred thousand livres are there in my carriage; there are besides, thirty thousand livres for emergencies."—"Very good, my lord," exclaimed Mademoiselle Guimard; "I have no horses, drive yours into my stables!" Bachaumont does not fail to inscribe this adventure on his tablets. He adds: "We are not yet informed of the name of this magnificent personage, well worthy to be inscribed in the annals of Cythera. He is believed to be a stranger, which is a reproach to French gallantry." Bachau-

mont would have done well to have ended here as above with an exclamation point.

This person, who remained unknown, carried his folly so far as to wish to marry Mademoiselle Guimard. Never did a woman show herself so frightened at such a proposition. It is true that the lover, not being able to prevail upon her by fair means, wished to compel her, pistol in hand. She had no other resource but to send her powerful friends to the lieutenant of police, to beseech him to protect her from such violence. The lieutenant of police was in great perplexity; if the lover proceeded to any extremity against the goddess of the opera, all Paris would be in revolution. He repaired in hot haste to Mademoiselle Guimard's: "So, mademoiselle, he shows himself an insolent fellow."—"Yes, sir, an insolent fellow who has the audacity to ask me in marriage—am I my own mistress?"—"No, you belong to all France. And as, in order to get married, you would have to renounce the opera, the devil, his pomps and works . . . . Don't be alarmed, mademoiselle, we will watch over you."—"But, M. Lieutenant of police, consider that his pistols are loaded. He hardly grants me six weeks to make up my mind."—"Count upon us; in six weeks this ill-bred man shall be deprived of the pleasure of seeing you, even at the opera." The dénouement was tragic. Having received orders to return instantly to Germany, this enraged German prince, who dared to pretend to the hand of a French

dancer, departed, but carried off Guimard; who probably would never have been seen again at the opera had not the Prince de Soubise pursued the ravisher with all the apparatus of war. The attack was spirited; the defence heroic. Three dead remained upon the field of battle; the ravisher was severely wounded, but Guimard was saved! The Prince de Soubise made himself master of the carriage in which she had fainted.

The Prince de Soubise then returned to her more desperately in love than ever; he even showed himself so jealous, that Monsieur de Bordes, who had ruined himself for the pleasure of being leader of the orchestra and chapel-master to the dancer, was requested not to present himself at her house for the future after sunset.

And here may I not produce in evidence these two unpublished letters; the first to the Prince de Soubise, the second to Monsieur de Bordes?

"My Lord and Master: Is this, then, cruel one, the reward of all my sacrifices? What have I done for you? or rather, what have I not done? What! you talk of abandoning me! Can I live without you? for have you not accustomed me to the expenses of royalty? It was well worth my while to sacrifice to you lords and barons who were willing to ruin themselves for me. Dear Soubise, believe me, I loved you, I still love you, I will always love you, as the song

says. It is all in vain; I do not believe a word of your letter, nor do you believe it either. You wished to laugh at my sorrows; be content, I have wept. Yes, I have wept, and you know I am not a fountain of tears. What are my griefs? Have I not become the slave of your caprices? One evening, you remember, you wished that I should dance the *gargouillade*; it was ridiculous for me, much more than for you, nevertheless I danced. Could you be jealous of any one? Does not your rank put you above such a prejudice? Besides, you know if I dance for everybody, my heart only dances for you. You look upon Monsieur de Bordes with an evil eye; you are quite wrong; Monsieur de Bordes is not a man, he is a musician. Marmontel gives you offence—a poet! Why, we don't rhyme together. To return to Monsieur de Bordes, do not forget that, to please you, I have forbidden him my door the moment the sun sets; I had even given him his dismissal in due form, but the poor man would have died of grief; he came, threw himself on his knees, and wept like a child; for my part, I was quite softened, I burst out laughing, and I did not feel cruel enough to drive him away, for he said to me: 'Drive me away like a dog, if you will not see me any more.' You are very difficult to get along with, my dear Soubise. If you knew how well that poor man plays on the violin! my feet are beginning a minuet at the very thought of it. Let us say no more about him; I feel I am becoming sad. Come

and see me; I have no longer heart for anything; I am capable of proceeding to any extremity. Would you believe that I sometimes think of hiding myself in a convent? Ah! cruel one, how much more agreeable it would be for me to hide myself with you!

"GUIMARD.

"P.S.—If you will not come and see me, come at least and get your letters and purse. Alas! your purse is like your heart, there is nothing in it."

"MY DEAR ORPHEUS: I was right when I told you the prince would be angry; he takes your affair quite seriously. You understand that your heart is not inexhaustible, like Soubise's purse. So let us stop where we are, and postpone our love to better times. In the mean time try to console yourself; and, as I have, perhaps, had a hand in ruining you, I have just set you down for a pension of twelve hundred livres for your pocket-money. For other matters I am not uneasy; you are a man too well-bred not to get invitations to dinner and supper. Besides, a man who plays so well on the violin is never at a loss. In our old days, if Fortune turns her back upon us, we will unite our talents and our miseries. We must be prepared for everything, it is the philosopher's rule; but for fear of moralizing, which I am not used to, I lay down my pen.

"GUIMARD."

The Prince de Soubise had again become the very humble servant of all the dancer's whims. She wished to have a right of chase, for herself and her friends, in the king's hunting-grounds. The prince, who was captain of the royal forests, granted her one of the best cantons. She had herself painted as Diana the huntress, and amused herself by delivering to the noblest lords permits to hunt.

She found great obstacles in the Duke de Richelieu and the Archbishop of Paris, to the re-opening of her city theatre; but as she had more friends than these two great pesonages, she succeeded in re-opening. *Truth in Wine* was to be given, but the archbishop succeeded in preventing the representation of that piece. "It seems," said the dancer, "that my lord is unwilling that truth should come out of the cask any more than the well."

A few days after, she condescended to dance a little ballet before the king. The king offered her a pension of fifteen hundred livres: "I accept," said she, on account of the hand it comes from; "for," she added as she departed from the king, "it is a drop of water in the sea; it is hardly enough to pay the candle-snuffer at my theatre."

If you wish to penetrate into the mysteries of the opera in the eighteenth century, deign to cast a glance upon this epistle to Mademoiselle Guimard, and the sirens of that dangerous sea. It is a frightful picture of the manners of the court and city in 1775, signed

by *a Turk, a member of all the Mahometan academies.*

"I cannot behold without admiration, the high point of glory which you and your companions have reached. Sweet licence, under the name of liberty, has at last opened the career to our boundless desires; you triumph, divine enchantresses, and your seductive charms have changed the face of France. Our palaces and hotels are now but the dull retreat of gloomy Hymen, where indolent wives languish in ennui, under the guard of powdered porters, who, like the marble at the door, serve merely to point out the hotel of the master, and the prison of his sad helpmate; while lively youth crowded in your little dwellings, make them the abode of love and sport, and your suppers are everywhere the despair of the great. Sovereign of fashion, is it not you who set them? Your taste determines them; the dimensions of your plumes become the common standard. The woman who studies at her glass to copy you in detail, in order to please, dares not imitate you on a grand scale, or follow nobler models. Divine age, that treads under foot prejudice and law, that confounds all conditions and ages, that consecrates all excesses, thou shalt be for ever celebrated in history! It is to you and your friends that we owe this happy revolution in our manners, to all of you belongs the glory, and you enjoy it. Whether, drawn in your elegant chariots, you adorn the dusty Boulevards; or as feathered nymphs, with your hair elegantly dressed and covered with a thousand orna-

ments, you eclipse in the front boxes the modest matron; or whether at the monotonous Colysée, with lofty front and bold eye, you display your charms, and draw in your train an eager crowd—are not all eyes turned upon you? Modern Pantheon, thou unitest all our divinities, and all our homage! Your privileges, divinities of the day, are as great as sacred, and why should they not be? Since this happy revolution, nothing stops you, there are no more obstacles in your way. Hymen turned to ridicule, dare hardly show himself. You appear publicly in your lovers' carriages, you wear their liveries, their colours, often their wives' diamonds; your little mansions everywhere arise from the ruins of great ones, and form by their number, in the outskirts of the capital and on the Boulevards, a sort of enclosure, a circumvallation, which, by keeping it in a state of blockade, assures you the empire of it for ever. You take pleasure in general for your aim, all men for your object, and the public happiness for the end of your sublime speculations. Yes, ladies, you are the true luxury, essential to a great state, the powerful attraction that draws strangers and their guineas; twenty modest matrons are worth less to the royal treasury than a single one among you; you belong to no rank of society, and are on a level with all, and are the wives *par excellence* of everybody."

In 1777, Mademoiselle Guimard was still leading the same course of life; listen to a journal. "*October 12th.* The parody of the opera of *Eruclide*, which

was played at Mademoiselle Guimard's, has been repeated at Choisy, on the eve of the departure to Fontainebleau. The king was so well pleased with it that he has given a pension to the author Despréaux,— a dancer of the opera. We may judge by this favour how much of the freedom of the good old times his majesty yet possesses, and how fond he is of a laugh." That good Louis XVI.!

"*December* 1.—The same parody was again represented on Monday at Mademoiselle Guimard's. The performance commenced at ten o'clock, before the most august assembly, composed of princes of the blood, several ministers, and a number of the great men of the kingdom."

I ask you, what more was there at court, except a tedious king?

In 1779 we find Mademoiselle Guimard conducting a revolution at the opera, yet more serious than that of the short petticoats which took place under Camargo. The subject of forbidding the right of maternity to the dancers was discussed, and it was Guimard who prevented violent measures, and who said at the meetings: "Above all, ladies and gentlemen, no combined resignations; that's what ruined the parliament."

She had, however, a serious passion; a poor officer of fortune, who played comic parts at her theatre, captivated her by the intelligence and melancholy of his handsome head. She had not time to love him, but she wept for him with the tears of love. He was

killed in a duel by one of her lovers. When the latter came to announce to Guimard, that he had just killed a fellow who had maintained to him he was not loved, she gave herself up to unbounded sorrow, and said to him passionately: "No! I do not love you; it was he whom I loved."

About 1780, Mademoiselle Guimard almost falls into oblivion. Here and there the gazettes make a passing mention of her beautiful style of dancing at the theatre, and pirouetting in life. But it is a subject out of fashion; people cease to ruin themselves for her caprices; she is too well known in every respect to excite further curiosity. Thus passes renown; we view its approach with ardour; we strew branches of laurel in its path, and place immortal crowns upon its brow. When once arrived we treat it as an old friend who teaches us nothing new. We see it depart without regret, scarcely taking time to bid it farewell.

What became of Guimard after her fabulous triumphs? These gipsies of the opera appear without telling us where they come from, and disappear without telling us whither they go. Was she silently extinguished at a church-door, like one of her brilliant companions? Did she keep for her dying day a little of her scandalous fortune and her mournful glory? Did she awake in terror, like Fragonard, her painter in ordinary, in another world, that is, in the republic one and indivisible? All we can assert, without doubt, is, that she died alone, without gaining a tear, a regret,

or a remembrance, unless it were from the prodigal sons she had ruined. But, as Heaven forgets not the alms that are given with two hands, the hand of fortune and the hand of the heart, much will be forgiven her on high. To give alms is to do penance; it is to take the path to heaven!

* * * *

I could still have wished to pass over in silence the end of this gallant career. She who called herself the rival of a queen, who contended in magnificence with a king — she who, in her character of goddess, considered marriage too far beneath her, ended by marrying, instead of a German prince, the Sieur Despréaux, *professor of the graces to the Conservatory*, with whom she died in silence at a virtuous abode in the Marais.

* A sculptor has moulded her foot, which I have under my hand. It is the foot of Diana the huntress, haughty, delicate, divine! Praxiteles never cut in marble a foot more noble and impassioned.

SOPHIE ARNOULD.

In the eighteenth century there flourished in France a wild garland of beautiful women, who are almost all worthy, from their genius, of being remembered with the courtesans of Greece. There was an Aspasia, who taught lessons of government, if not of eloquence, to Louis XV., who, it is well known, was not altogether a Socrates or a Pericles; a Laïs, a Leontium, a Phryne, a Thaïs, a Thargelia, who, under the names of Dubarry, Guimard, Laguerre, Gaussin, and Sophie Arnould, enchanted Versailles and Paris, the court and the theatre. And as in ancient Greece, Thaïs found her Aristippus, Leontium her Epicurus;—I am not speaking of disciples;—Phryne her Praxiteles, Thargelia her Xerxes; in France, all these wild and beautiful creatures, with the exception of Marion Delorme, or Ninon de Lenclos, Pompadour, or Dubarry, were trained up in the theatre, the theatre, *the school of morals!*

There are some severe people who would condemn at once, without giving them a hearing, all these women who were alike gay and sad, "as perverse creatures unworthy the memory of man; sinners without repentance, who died in mortal sin." This is what

they say in their indignation, without a single tear of charity for these lost sisters. They are wrong. I do not present myself as the bad advocate of a bad cause. Thank God! the altar of Bacchus is overthrown, Venus drowned in tears; sentiment triumphs. The grape reddens on the hillside; but the soul has now, more than ever, wings which raise it to the splendours of the heavens. Notwithstanding, I cannot help feeling a compassion which is entirely religious in its nature, for some of these women that I often meet on my path in tracing out the more serious history of the eighteenth century. As they had a large share of the sun of their day, that familiar history, which is appropriate to literature and the arts, which records on the same page opinions and follies, persons and passions, in a word, true character, should give a glance at those personages who have been too much despised. The honest historian should be bold enough to go everywhere. Nothing that either flourishes or fades under the sun is unworthy of his study; the muse is a perpetual virgin that traverses the world without soiling the whiteness of her feet. Moreover, this is but a simple portrait in pastel, with a smile upon the lips, a shade upon the brow, a bouquet of roses upon the bosom.

Sophie Arnould was born in Paris, in the midst of the carnival, in the year 1740. She was born in the old mansion of Ponthieu, Rue Béthisy, in the bed-chamber where Admiral de Coligny was assassinated, and where the beautiful duchess of Montbazon died.

"I entered the world through a celebrated door," Sophie Arnould used to say. While she was yet a child, her mind had received a certain hue of romance from the memory of the amours of Madame de Monbazon and Monsieur de Rancé. This old mansion of Ponthieu had become a hotel under the management of the father and mother of Sophie Arnould. These good people had five children; but thanks to their good inclinations, and the revenue of the hotel, these children were brought up with a pious and affecting care. Sophie Arnould had masters like a young lady of good family; a music-master, a dancing-master, a singing-master. She early gave evidence that she would sing in a way to entice all the world; never had an ancient syren vaunted by the poets a voice more full of freshness and melody. Her mother knew that this voice was a treasure. "We shall be as rich as princes," Sophie Arnould used to say when a child; "a good fairy was present at my birth, who endowed me with the power of changing at the sound of my voice, everything into gold and diamonds; others vomit toads and serpents, but I will pour out floods of pearls, rubies, and topazes."

Her mother took her to some religious communities to sing requiems. One day, at Val-de-Grace, the Princess of Modena, who had gone into retirement there, having heard the charming voice of Sophie, ordered her to come to her hotel; the young girl had already considerable sprightliness of conversation, she

chatted with the grace and sweetness of a bird; she succeeded in charming the duchess, who said to her, giving her a necklace: "My beautiful girl, you sing like an angel, you have more genius than an angel! your fortune is made."

From that day the name of Sophie Arnould became current in the world; her grace, her beautiful eyes, her repartees, but especially her enchanting voice, were spoken of everywhere. Monsieur de Fondpertuis, the minister of the court-pleasures, came one day in his coach to take her to the Marchioness de Pompadour. "I forbid you saying a word," said the noble courtesan, "do not speak, but sing." Sophie sang without urging, some of Philidor's songs; never did a nightingale shake out of her throat so many pearls, never did its song of springtide penetrate the grove with more freshness; it was the dew of the morning which glistens in the sun's rays. Madame de Pompadour applauded with enthusiasm. "Young girl, you will make some day a charming princess." Madame Arnould, who was present, fearing that her daughter was to play too high a part on this earthly stage, replied to the marchioness: "I do not know what you mean; my daughter has not sufficient fortune to marry a prince; on the other hand, she has been too well brought up to become a princess of the theatre."

Notwithstanding, from that day Sophie Arnould was on the road to the opera. In order not to alarm her mother, she was first told that her daughter was

enrolled only for the music of the King; but soon Francœur, superintendent of the royal music, urged Sophie to enter the opera, telling her that she owed a duty to France, as well as to the King, and that all the hearts in the kingdom would beat with pleasure in listening to her divine music.—"To go to the opera," she said, "is to go to the devil, but, however, that is my fate!"—We are all the same: we lay our faults, whatever they may be, at the door of fate. Madame Arnould opposed it with all the authority of a mother. —"It is not to the opera, but to a convent you shall go," said she to Sophie, as she locked her up in her room. Fortunately for the devil, who never foregoes his rights, the King of France deigned to mingle in the pleasures of the public; he signed an order commanding Sophie to be conducted to the opera, under the authority of the law. The poor mother did not yet despair of saving that virtue which was already so much subdued; she watched over her life with the greatest solicitude; she accompanied her to the opera, even to the green-room. The rakes of 1757 might flutter about the singer; the only favour they obtained was the overpowering look of the mother!

Sophie Arnould made her first appearance at the age of seventeen. A journalist of the time thus describes her appearance at the opera: "She is the most natural, the most unctuous, the most charming actress, that ever was seen. She is not beautiful, but she has all the attractions of beauty. She has not

been spoilt by masters; she comes forth, just as she is from the hands of Nature: in consequence, her *début* was a triumph!"—The journalist was in error. Sophie Arnould had had masters, and she again took others. Mademoiselle Fel taught her the art of singing; Mademoiselle Clairon taught her the art of acting.

Fifteen days after her first appearance, Sophie Arnould was worshipped by all Paris. When she appeared the opera was overwhelmed.—"I doubt," said Fréron, "whether people will give themselves as much trouble to enter Paradise."—All the gentlemen of the day disputed with each other the glory of throwing bouquets at her feet whenever she appeared behind the scenes. She passed along carelessly, as if she had been always accustomed to walk upon flowers. Madame Arnould, who was herself a woman of some cleverness, used to say to these importunate gentlemen: "Do not strew thorns upon her path!"—But her mother might do her best; might open wide her large eyes; Love, who is as blind as a bat, managed to slip in between her and her daughter. Among the young noblemen who obstinately persevered in hovering about Sophie, the Count de Lauraguais was the most desperately enamoured of her: he was resolved upon victory. He tried at first to carry off the beauty from behind the scenes: this first attempt failed. As he had a genius for such things, and was fond of adventure, he contrived a plan that was more piquant.

One evening that he was supping with some friends, he declared to them that before a fortnight had passed, Madame Arnould would not conduct her daughter any longer to the opera. Next morning a young provincial poet put up, under the name of Dorval, at the Hôtel Lisieux. His respectable appearance and his modest air struck Madame Arnould. He related to her, with a great appearance of artless simplicity, the object of his journey: he had left behind him in Normandy his mother, "who resembles you, madame," and his sister, "who resembles Mademoiselle Sophie," in order to seek his fortune in Paris as a literary man.—"Poor child!" exclaimed Madame Arnould, "why did you not remain with your mother and your sister?"—"Do not despair yet. I have a tragedy with me worthy of being played by Lekain and Clairon. Oh, how many nights of delight have I spent over this work of my youth! To tell you the truth, it was not only glory that smiled upon me, it was also love!"—
—As he spoke, Dorval cast the glance of a serpent upon Sophie, who listened to him with all the curiosity of her heart—"Yes, madame, there is in my country a beautiful girl, a brunette, full of life and spirit, made by love and for love: I love her to madness!"—"That is a delightful madness," sighed Sophie, carried away by the impassioned manner of the newly-arrived lodger. —"A delightful madness!" said the mother, assuming a severe look; "I would not advise you, my daughter, to fall into it. As for you, sir, you are

much to be pitied for having come to Paris to seek your fortune in the company of poetry and love! To be in love and to be a poet at the same time, is to be doubly ruined!"—"I am not of your opinion," said Dorval, while regarding Sophie with passion; "have I not all the treasures of the heart in my hand?"—"That's enough nonsense for to-day," said Madame Arnould, interrupting them; "Monsieur Dorval, besides, is fatigued, no doubt. There is the key of his room."—"Alas!" thought Sophie, who already loved to play upon words, "he carries off the key of my heart!"

Love is everlastingly forced to play a part, to make use of masks, surprises, and deceptions. The love which goes straight ahead upon the great common highway never arrives, but dies half-way; but the love which travels by a concealed path never misses its object; it takes by surprise, and all is accomplished. Women seek something besides love in the heart of man; they seek also intrigue. They always appreciate the romance which is prepared to overcome them, for, for them, love is a romance. The more it is involved, the more it entices them. The Count de Lauraguais understood women well. Arriving from Normandy, in the character of an artless and imaginative poet, who comes to Paris to seek glory with which to crown his mistress, was it not presenting himself like a veritable Don Juan at the feet of an actress, who at first sight was ready to give him her heart? It must be

said, to the praise of Sophie Arnould, that she had never taken notice of the Count de Lauraguais behind the scenes of the opera, where he always appeared with the importance of an hereditary prince. She loved Dorval at first sight, who appeared to her in the sad condition of a poor poet from the provinces.

The conquest was rapid; at the end of a week Dorval carried off Sophie from the Hôtel Lisieux. Never was an abduction more gentle and impassioned; he carried her in his arms fully half an hour. He had made an appointment with his lacquey, but he had mistaken the street. Half a century afterward, the Count de Lauraguais having become a peer of France, and Duke of Brancas, described this romantic ravishment with all the fire of youth: "She was Psyche, I was Zephyr. I had wings, the wings of love. Poor frightened turtle-dove! she lay so lightly upon my bosom that I was afraid of her flying away. She began to weep. 'What will my mother say?'—'I have a flood of diamonds for you.'—'My poor mother!'—'I have also a necklace of the finest pearls.'—'Who will console her?'—'By-the-by, I forgot to tell you that I have hired a little hotel for you, somewhat better furnished than the Lisieux hotel.'" At this moment the count succeeded in finding his carriage: "The remainder may be guessed, that is the reason I say nothing about it."

This event put the whole court and city in commotion: Madame Lauraguais and Sophie Arnould were

both pitied. It is known that the Count de Lauraguais defied public opinion, like a beautiful girl during the carnival, who changes her disguise each day. Sophie was already the fashion in the world of wicked passions. Her fame shone with a splendid brilliancy; she had never before been compared but to Orpheus, she was now compared to Sappho and Ninon. As she possessed a fluent readiness of speech, a great freedom of thought, and a wanton grace of style, it was soon settled that she had gathered the heritage of Fontenelle and Piron: every one of her repartees passed from mouth to mouth, from Versailles to the Courtille. She was celebrated by the whole pleiad of the poets, the warblers of the times. This was not the whole of her glory; the whole Encyclopædia met at her house, in order to study philosophy in full liberty: it must be mentioned that the suppers at Sophie Arnould's were better than any others. Proud of her success in society, she did not forget the opera, the true theatre of her glory. She always sang with a fresh and melodious voice; she acted, besides, with all the grace and all the sentiment of a great actress. Garrick, during his visit to Paris, declared that Mademoiselle Arnould was the only actress of the opera that pleased his eyes, and moved his heart.

In spite of the remonstrances of the court, the Count de Lauraguais continued to live with her under the same roof. Madame de Lauraguais, who was a model of an injured woman, sold her diamonds in

order that her husband might do honour to his rank; but God only knows how many diamonds it would have been necessary to sell, in order to support the luxury of Sophie Arnould. Her hotel was a palace, her saloon a rich museum, her toilette fit for a fairy. In the midst of such a life of wild and profuse expense, (would it be believed?) the Count de Lauraguais and Mademoiselle Arnould loved each other with the tenderest affection.

Four years passed in this way, to the great surprise of the friends of the count and of the singer. Never did such a love take its rise upon the boards of the opera. Sophie Arnould, as might be imagined, was the first to grow weary. During the count's absence for a short time, she decided that it was time to break the connection: she did not wish to keep anything of his. She ordered a carriage, put her jewels into it, her laces, her letters, all that reminded her of the happiness she had had in his company. "Go," said she to her lacquey, "order the carriage to drive to the house of Madame de Lauraguais; all that it contains belongs to her." When the lacquey was about obeying her orders, she called him back: "Wait, I have forgotten one very important matter." She sent for her waiting women: "Bring me the count's two children; they certainly belong to him," said she, as she walked backward and forward in her apartment. The two children were brought; one was still in his cradle, the other had just begun to lisp a few words. She

kissed them both, and bid them farewell. "Here," said she to her lacquey, "La Prairie, take these children in the carriage, and carry them off with the rest of the things." La Prairie obeyed without saying a word; he drove straight to the Hôtel Lauraguais, where the countess was all alone. The poor woman received the children and sent back the jewels. The women of the eighteenth century have been often reviled; ought not this act to do a great deal in the way of absolution? Are there not a great many women of the present day who would have kept the jewels and sent back the children?

The love of the two lovers did not end here. After some infidelity they returned to the first starting-point. It had created great scandal, it was still greater when the reconciliation became known. The count made several journeys; it is understood that during his absence, Sophie Arnould allowed her heart to go a travelling. "Oh! cruel one," said the count to her on his return, "you have been a greater traveller than I have been."—"A rolling stone gathers no moss," she replied, "but alas! my heart has gathered a good deal of ennui. The Prince d'Hénin was nearly the death of me with his bouquets, his madrigals, and his money; it was a veritable shower of love."—"Wait," said the count, "I will deliver you from this troublesome prince." On the same day, 11th February, 1774, he called together four doctors belonging to the faculty of Paris: "I have an important question for your de-

cision," said he to them with great gravity; "I want to know if it is possible to die of ennui." After a profound deliberation the doctors decided the question in the affirmative. They justified their opinion in a long preamble, and then signed it with the most serious air in the world. "And its remedy?" asked the count: they decided that it was necessary that the mind of the patient should be diverted,—that there should be a change of scene and of society. With this writing in his possession, the count went straight to a commissioner, to make a charge against the Prince d'Hénin, of worrying Mademoiselle Arnould with attentions, to the extent of killing her with ennui. "I demand, in consequence, an injunction upon the prince, to prevent him from visiting the singer until she is free from the disease of ennui, with which she is attacked, and which will be her death in the opinion of the faculty, which would be a public as well as a private misfortune." It might be guessed that such a joke would end in a duel. The prince and the count fought with each other to such good—or bad—purpose, that on the very evening of the duel they met each other at the house of Sophie Arnould.

A little while before the revolution she abandoned the theatre, the passions of the opera, and the passions of the world, for retirement in the country. She imitated Voltaire, Choiseul, Boufflers: she was enthusiastically fond of farming, like the queen Marie-Antoinette; she kept cows and sheep; she made

butter and cheese; she made her own hay and gathered her own peas.

In the midst of the revolution she sold her little estate, in order to buy a house at Luzarches which had belonged to the penitents of the third order of Franciscans. As she was always clever, she had the following inscription put over her door: *Ite missa est.* She busied herself about her salvation and death. This woman, who, like a Magdalen, had made her heart the sport of every wind of the spring, had profaned her soul by all kinds of wicked love, prepared herself for death with a kind of cloistral voluptuousness. At the end of her park, in a ruined convent, she had built her tomb, and inscribed upon the stone the following passage from Scripture:—

"*Multa remittuntur ei peccata, quia dilexit multum.*"

Would it be believed? The sans-culottes of Luzarches disturbed her in her retreat, taking her for a nun? They made a domiciliary visit one morning to the house of the penitents.—"My friends," said she, "I was born a free woman; I have always been an active citizen, and know the rights of man by heart."—The sans-culottes would not trust to her word; they were about taking her to prison, when one of them observed a marble bust upon a bracket; it was Sophie Arnould, in the character of Iphigenia; this man, deceived, no doubt, by the scarf of the priestess, thought it was the

bust of Marat.—"She is a good citizen woman," said he, as he bowed to the marble bust.

Sophie Arnould had still left an income of thirty thousand francs, and friends without end. In less than two years she lost all her fortune and her friends. She returned to Paris with a few things saved from the wreck. A bad lawyer, who had the management of her property, succeeded in completing her ruin. She fell into absolute misery, and profound solitude. She knocked in vain at the doors of all those who had loved her. She knocked, indeed, at many a door, but it was like knocking upon their tombs! those who had loved her were no longer there. The prison, exile, and the scaffold had dispersed them for ever. She was reduced to the extremity of asking aid from a hairdresser who had dressed her hair during her better days. This man lived in the Rue Petit Lion. He gave her an asylum, but in a miserable nook, without light and without a fireplace, where the poor woman shivered with cold and wasted away. She paid dearly for her past greatness; certainly Mary Magdalen never underwent so severe a penance. Notwithstanding she still sung. "That voice," says a biographer, "which resounded like thunder in Armida, and which faintly sighed in Psyche, was heard mingling in the mystic concerts of some obscure religious sects; the reflection upon the uncertainty of events and the mystery of fate, found utterance in a moan!"

One day that she was as usual shivering in her

room, without complaining, and not despairing of her star, rebuilding for the thousandth time the castle of the happy days of her life, the hairdresser entered her chamber. "Well!" said she to him, good-naturedly, "is that the way to come into a room, without knocking?"—"This is, truly, the time for joking!" said the hairdresser, with an angry manner; "do you know what has occurred? They certainly take my wig for the sign of an inn. The Count de T—— has just alighted at my shop."—"The poor man!" exclaimed Sophie Arnould.—"He comes incog. from Germany, without a sou. The Lord be praised! If all the people whose hair I have dressed should come to me for food and lodging, I shall have my share!"

Sophie Arnould went down into the shop. "Is it you?" exclaimed the Count de T——, throwing himself upon her neck.—"It appears to me, indeed, like a romance. Exile must be hard to bear, since you are willing to come back to this city, all deluged in blood, where you have no friends. Believe me, you will find yourself more of an exile in Paris than at the court of the king of Prussia."—"What matters it?" said the Count de T——, "have I not found one heart that remembers me?" They embraced each other again, and swore that they never should be parted. The hairdresser lodged his new guest in a garret in the fifth story. At break of day, Sophie Arnould went upstairs to him with a cup of coffee in her hand; they shared it together in a fraternal way, after which

they talked of past times, in order to try and forget somewhat the anguish of the present. At dinner-time the hairdresser begged them to come down into his back shop, where they all dined, the best they could, at the same table. "I have only one table and one porringer," said the honest fellow; "if it was not for that, I would not take the liberty of dining with you; but," added he, with a spice of roguery, "different times, different manners!"

A curious chapter might be written upon this interior of the hairdresser, harbouring two such illustrious guests. There would be more than one piquant saying, more than one philosophical thought, more than one picture of deep human interest to be collected. It is very much to be regretted that Sophie Arnould, who wrote such charming letters, did not describe in detail her residence in the Rue du Petit Lion. It is not known what became of the Count de T——; I could never find out his real name. The memoirs of the day say that he had been in his youth "one of the handsomest pluckers of grapes from the *espalier* of the opera."

Sophie found her good star again before death. Fouché had been one of her lovers; having become a minister in 1798, he held one morning a supposed-highly important audience with a woman who was said to have some secrets of state to communicate. He recognised Sophie Arnould, listened to her history with emotion, and decided at once that a woman who

had enchanted, by her voice and her eyes, all hearts for the space of twenty years, deserved a national recompense; he consequently bestowed upon her a government pension of twenty-four hundred livres, and ordered an apartment in the Hôtel d'Angevilliers to be given her. Sophie Arnould, who on the evening before was without a single friend, found troops of them visiting her at her new residence. All the poets of the day, who were bad poets, all the actors, all the frequenters of the Caveau, assembled in her house as if it had been another Hôtel Rambouillet, only, instead of affected conceits, true French gaiety overflowed there.

It might be possible, like the biographers, to quote some of the sayings of Sophie Arnould; but this kind of wit is not current now-a-days among decent folks; it is the wit over one's wine, as was said of Dancourt's wit. Among the sayings that might be quoted to the glory of this gay, free and original wit, let us not forget the following: Mademoiselle Guimard had written a letter to Sophie full of malice, in which the latter was charged with having committed the seven capital sins seven times a day. She replied as follows, "*I double you*," and she signed her name.

She had Rulhières and Beaumarchais for lovers. She has been charged with having often borrowed her wit from her lovers. Why are not her lovers charged with having shone with hers?

In 1802, at the same time there was buried without

pomp, without noise, and without show, three women who, for nearly half-a-century, had filled France with the brilliancy of their beauty, the pomp of their talent, or the noise of their amours; Sophie Arnould, Mademoiselle Clairon, and Madame Dumesnil. Sophie Arnould, while confessing during her last hour, related to the curé of Saint-Germain L'Auxerrois all her wicked love passions. When she described to him the fierce jealousy of the Count de Lauraguais, him whom she had loved the most, the curé said to her, "My good woman, what bad times you have passed through!" —"Oh!" exclaimed she with tears in her eyes, "they were good times! I was so miserable!" This heart-felt touch, that a poet has given in verse, consoles me for all the wicked wit of Sophie Arnould.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE AT THE TRIANON.

A RUSTIC MASK IN ONE ACT.

AT THE LITTLE TRIANON ON THE BORDERS OF A LAKE.

SCENE I.

THE QUEEN, MARIE-ANTOINETTE.

Now I am no longer the queen; here I am simply a woman, the humblest one in the kingdom. God be praised! little birds, celebrate my joy in song as you do your own. May your warblings reach the heavens with the perfume of the roses! Announce to the God of Nature that the best days of my life have been passed in this park, in the shade of the chesnut groves, upon this verdant turf, in the retirement of these humble cottages, sailing idly in these barks! It is here alone that I can partake of the blessings of earth and sky, of the sun and of love.

[*She is seated on the borders of a lake, and leans her head upon her hand.*]

SCENE II.

THE QUEEN, MADAME DE POLIGNAC.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. Madame, you are in a pensive mood!

THE QUEEN. Ah! is it you? an agreeable surprise! Do you know what I was thinking of?

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. The happiness of your subjects.

THE QUEEN. You are wrong; have I any subjects when I am here? I was just in the humour to declaim in the old-fashioned way against the throne.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. Not against the throne of beauty and of grace.

THE QUEEN. Against the throne of kings, the saddest prison-house that can be found on earth. Formerly, at Vienna, I was as free as the bulfinches that sing. I sang myself then! Why was I so blind as to be caught in the snare? You see, my beautiful duchess, you will never know in what chains I drag out my life.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. Chains forged of flowers.

THE QUEEN. Chains of flowers! Alas! the first link is Louis XVI.; who knows who will be the last! A thousand times happier are those who are born into the world in an humble wicker cradle; they do not possess a kingdom, but they have their life to themselves.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. No one is the mistress of her own life, God alone has the power to govern all here below.

THE QUEEN. Ah! if I was not queen of France, you would see how I would pass my life according to my own inclination. Would God hinder me from

breathing the free air, from climbing the hills, from plucking the daisy and the primrose? How happy would I be to carry my rye-crust to the valley, drink at the spring, and seat myself on the rock! The bread, the water of the spring, all these would be mine, while, as queen of France, you know, to believe those spouting philosophers, the bread I eat is the bread of my subjects, the water I drink is the sweat of the labour of the people. If I am seen to smile, there is a scandal at once, on the pretext that there is misery in France. What is left to me then—to me? Believe me, I am poorer than any peasant-woman; her misery is blessed of heaven; her cabin is in ruins, but has she not the whole valley for a dwelling-place? has she not tents formed by the green trees, which God himself upholds? In drinking from the running stream, she has no golden goblet, but it is much pleasanter to drink out of her hand. Besides, the little she has is her own, her tin plates, her cotton curtains, her coarse linen petticoat; it is the fruit of her labour; and I, what have I, I ask?

SCENE III.

THE QUEEN, MADAME DE POLIGNAC, COUNT D'ARTOIS, *afterwards* MADAME DE COIGNY, AND MADAME D'ADHEMAR.

COUNT D'ARTOIS. All the hearts of the kingdom, from the heart of the king . . . .

THE QUEEN. Stop: where there is nothing, the queen loses her rights.

MADAME DE COIGNY (*approaching unexpectedly*). Well! how shall we pass the afternoon? Are we to have an audience of her majesty the queen of France and Navarre, or of her majesty Jeanette the dairy-maid, with her bare arms? Are we to have the pleasure of beholding those white hands milking the cows feeding yonder?

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS. Well! I am ready for anything. Let the queen command, and I am at the feet of Jeanette.

THE QUEEN (*smiling*). Rise, count.

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS (*who had remained standing, falls on his knees*). I obey.

THE QUEEN (*turning toward Madame de Coigny*). What have you in your hand, duchess?

MADAME DE COIGNY. Do you not see, it is a seal? A rose surrounded with butterflies, bees, hornets, and young girls.

THE QUEEN (*reading the motto*). "See what it is to be a rose." Give me this seal, we will make a queen of the rose.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. What comedy shall we play to-day? Shall it be the *Précieuses Ridicules*? Who will be the audience? the king is not here.

COUNTESS D'ADHEMAR (*in a whisper to the queen*). There he comes; it is he. The Abbé de Vermont has recognised him.

THE QUEEN (*somewhat excited*). Ladies, I am not in the humour to-day for a comedy; I have a passion

for solitude at present. In the evening, perhaps, we may return to our usual pleasant amusements. In the mean time I will have a reverie under the shade of my willow that I planted. Would it not seem that I had prepared a shade for my tomb?

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS. The Queen has put on crape, I will not say upon her crown, but upon her heart. Beauty—is it not born to smile?

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. There are some tears more beautiful than smiles; is it not so, Madame de Coigny? You know it is so, you who weep so *apropos!*

MADAME DE COIGNY (*with an air of vexation*). I do not hide myself in order to weep.

THE QUEEN (*impatiently*). Flap your wings, my pretty birds; go, warble elsewhere your gay babble. Do me the favour of giving me an hour of solitude. Solitude is the counsellor of kings.

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS. Solitude is good for kings, but not for Queens.

THE QUEEN (*addressing Madame d'Adhémar*). I want to speak to you.

[*The count, after a low bow, accompanies Madame de Polignac, and Madame de Coigny toward the Great Trianon.*]

SCENE IV.

THE QUEEN AND MADAME D'ADHEMAR.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. I did not hope to see you so soon all alone.

THE QUEEN. You say, then, that he is yonder?

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. Yes, yonder with the gardeners, whom he is giving some good lessons, according to the Abbé. It is full a week now, since he has been in the habit of coming here to walk. I was far from suspecting that it was him, I thought he had been in exile. The poor fellow! he has not the air of a lord, by any means.

THE QUEEN. He is, however, a great lord in his way. Most great lords merely represent a name—he represents a man, and such a man! He has grown great with good and bad passions; the passions are the conflicts of philosophy. His genius, at least, does not smell of the college, it has the freshness of a solitary valley. How eloquent he is at the sight of Nature! If God is his master, Nature is his school. He listens, and he sings. His is the voice of the woods and the brooks; his is a heart which speaks, and not the echo of a book. The writers of the great age almost all exhale the flavour of the barren dust of the library; in him there is a good rustic flavour. Others are mere echoes of a youth passed among books: Rousseau is an echo of a youth passed on the mountains. He recalls the pasture, the snow, the periwinkle; he makes you breathe the air of the forest. Others take you to walk in a royal garden, on straight and well-swept walks; instead of listening to the wild concerts of the storm, the hymns of the morning, the songs of the evening, you hear the music of the harp.

MALAME D'ADHEMAR. I passed backward and forward by him, in order to have a good look at him; he is hardly tamed yet. The other day, Monsieur de Saint Fargeau's dog attacked him; Monsieur de Saint Fargeau, thinking him hurt, ran to him all in a fright: "Can I be of any service to you?"—"Chain up your dog," was all the reply. He might pass for a Diogenes, don't you think so? When he caught sight of me, he put on the look of an owl.

THE QUEEN. Of an owl that looks at the sun. It was your beauty that dazzled him.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. He looked at me with a stealthy glance, trying to conceal himself among the trees.

THE QUEEN. He is there! If he should recognise me? Fortunately he has never seen me.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. But if he sees you, how can he help recognising the queen?

THE QUEEN. He is a savage—he only half looks at the women. My dress, besides, has nothing about it which can discover me. I will assume an air of indifference; do you think that the gardeners will succeed in bringing him to us within the enclosure of the Little Trianon?

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. The Abbé de Vermont has performed his part admirably: beholding him at the gate lost in a reverie without crossing the threshold, he asked the gardeners, as he made signs to them, if the Little Trianon was opened to day for strangers. "It

will be in half an hour," the gardeners replied. "I will wait then," said the abbé, "and I also," said the savage. Thereupon he approaches the gardeners, to talk over with them their plans without further ceremony. In a few minutes the abbé will return, he will follow without doubt, although he may not care to take the same path.

THE QUEEN. He would not like to come this way if he should see us.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. Who knows? It is only the men he avoids. If there were all women in this world, God preserve us! perhaps he would be more sociable.

THE QUEEN. Is not that him that I see through the gate?

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. Yes, that's the man of truth and of nature.

THE QUEEN. Do you see him? here he comes botanising. But see how pale I am, and how I blush!

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. You, before whom the whole world grows pale and blushes!

THE QUEEN. I only believed in the majesty of titles, and I tremble before the majesty of genius.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. You see that he is not afraid of us; he has been told, that he would perhaps meet some German or Flemish women.

THE QUEEN. Admirable! Let us go without ceremony, and ask him what he is doing at the Trianon.

SCENE V.

THE SAME, JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR (*speaking with a German accent*). Will you accompany us to see this retreat? We are strangers; what village is this?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (*bowing*). I am a stranger myself, and live at a great distance from the court. I came here for nature, which shows itself here and there, although they are doing their best to conceal it. I cannot tell much of what passes at the Trianon.

THE QUEEN. The walls of the court are not so high, but what is doing there can be seen.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. I always pass by without looking that way. Is it worth the trouble to raise one's head to behold the follies of the court, when one is obliged in spite of oneself to witness the folly of the town? Dressed in silk or linen, is it not always the same folly?

THE QUEEN. You see the world without its illusions.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. I see the world as it is. Is it not our folly which makes us all go to listen to the *dénouement?* God calculated on our folly, in creating the world. So, what does the spectator behold? the spectacle of folly.

THE QUEEN (*aside*). He is mad. (*Aloud.*) Folly, if you will: what matters if it is agreeable? You

know, without doubt, from hearsay, what goes on here; what these cottages are for, why these cows are pasturing in the queen's park? This is by no means a mystery at Paris.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. I should give but a poor account of what I know so little about.

THE QUEEN. What is the origin——

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. Louis XIV. designed the Grand Trianon, to have a refuge from Versailles during his days of amorous pleasure: Louis XV. designed the Petit Trianon, in order to have a refuge from the Grand. It is here that Madame Dubarry had the train of her petticoat borne by a negro, while waiting the *good pleasure of the king*. It is a charming place; why must we stumble against such recollections? Fortunately, the queen, Marie-Antoinette, has diffused here the perfume of her grace and beauty.

THE QUEEN (*catching her breath*). Have you seen the queen?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. I have not seen her, but I have imagined her. She had for her masters, Maria Theresa, Metastasio, and Gluck; she knows that the blood of the Cæsars flows in her veins. How could she fail to have, I will not say, the nobility and dignity of a queen, but of a woman?

THE QUEEN. Yes, the Abbé Metastasio gave lessons to Marie-Antoinette (*recalling the thoughts of her childhood*) :—

"Io perdei: l'augusta figlia" . . .

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. Thank God! the queen does not imitate Madame Dubarry; she does not drag a negro at the skirt of her robe; she does not come here, for a worn out wanton.

THE QUEEN. And what does she do here?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. She comes here to revive the recollections of her childhood; she comes to forget the golden cares of a throne. These rustic enjoyments have been always to the taste of a court: the shepherdess always dreams of the happiness of a queen, queens seek the happiness of shepherdesses. Under Louis XIV. the same taste prevailed; read the memoirs of Mademoiselle de Montpensier. For the regency, behold the rustic masques of Watteau.

THE QUEEN. These cottages are quite a village; what is the village for?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. It is a school of good government (*smiling maliciously*). Unfortunately for royalty, the king is always *de trop* in this village. When the king is away, everything goes on famously: when he is present, it is all over; there is no more laughing, no more singing, there is no more happiness. Yonder is the Marlborough tower; but when *madame ascends her tower*, it is to see that the king is not coming.

THE QUEEN (*somewhat disturbed*). Is n't there a theatre?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. Yes, as if the farce played at court was not enough! When a woman has

the misfortune to be a queen, she becomes so wearied of her station that she tries constantly to disguise herself as a shepherdess, sometimes as an actress; but she may do her best, it is the same heart that grows weary, and searches everywhere.

THE QUEEN. For what does she search?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. For that which cannot be found at the court; liberty, love, solitude, all that constitutes happiness here below, or rather the shadow of happiness.

THE QUEEN. Is there not the same happiness at court as elsewhere?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. At the court there is nothing to be found but pleasure; and if happiness, as the wise man has said, is a diamond, pleasure is only a drop of water (*turning around to look at the meadow*). It might be said truly that happiness dwells here. The Trianon is an Eden, where there is nothing wanting but the apple to pluck. This place consoles me somewhat for the park of Le Nôtre.

THE QUEEN. What! is not then the splendour of Versailles to your taste?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. I cannot feel at my ease there; its formal magnificence, its trees cut to measure, its fountains imprisoned in marble, all its choice wonders are not in my way. I cannot breathe freely there, I who am not clothed in purple. I am always afraid of meeting there a haughty and foolish court, that would laugh at my threadbare coat and

my pensive air, or rather I am always in fear of meeting one of Le Nôtre's gardeners, ready to cut my hair, and trim my beard, as if I were some wild tree. At least, there is an illusion about an English garden: the freedom that the trees seem to have of growing as they please, without having to submit to the sacrilege of the pruning-knife, makes me imagine I am at liberty. I come and go like a lord in his manor, for when I see nature as God has created it, I fancy myself at home. It is there where I build my castles in the air.

THE QUEEN. I understand you; but why do you fear and fly from all who are clothed in purple? Kings are more to be pitied than feared.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. It is clear that they are feared, avoided. Why should they be pitied? Gilded misfortunes awaken no pity.

THE QUEEN. You are a republican, sir; it is on this account that you hate kings.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. Oh, madame! I do not hate even my enemies, notwithstanding they have done me deep wrong.

THE QUEEN (*with a surprised look*). You, sir! Are you a king then? (*recovering herself*). Enemies! he need have none who does not wish them. It is a glory. Permit me to pay my obeisance to you; permit me at the same time to ask you your name.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (*with a proud look*). My name is not a mystery; perhaps you may have heard

me spoken of. I am Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a citizen of Geneva.

THE QUEEN. Jean-Jacques Rousseau! say rather a citizen of the world.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. A little noise, a little smoke, a little dust, that is all.

THE QUEEN. That is the history of kings.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. You speak too much of kings not to belong to the court. (*Looking at the queen and hesitating.*) I did not think that the queen was here. . . . .

THE QUEEN. She does not wish to be considered as here——

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. I am far from complaining. I have got rid of a prejudice——

THE QUEEN. You will love kings.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. I will love the queen.

THE QUEEN. As she is loved at court.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. Better. Sincerely, deeply, until that day when the philosophers shall have thrown the last spadeful of earth on my grave. Like the Trappists, this has been their only cry of friendship: Brother, thou must die. Thus I do not, like Pascal, see an abyss before me; I see an open grave. I have no longer a place in the scene. The priests, the parliament, the philosophers have said to me as to another wandering Jew: Go, and stop not! Proscribed, banished, driven out, this has been the reward of my works. And God is my witness, I thought I was

teaching mankind love and truth. Blind man that I was! I struggled with the great and the lies of the world, without taking the time to struggle against my own miseries. A poor star-gazer that falls into the well! I was thinking of the life of others without thinking of my own. How have I lived? What have I done with my heart and my reason? I preached to the great family of mankind, where is my own family? Madness! madness! madness!

THE QUEEN (*to Madame d'Adhémar*). He frightens me! such pride and such misery!

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (*seeing the promenaders pass*). There they are.

THE QUEEN. Who is coming?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. Ah, you do not know, then? Those who proscribe, exile, drive me away, or insult me! Do you not see Grimm?

THE QUEEN It is the Abbé de Vermont.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. It is Grimm! it is Grimm! I can see him well; I feel his presence: he is breathing his hatred into the air that I inhale. (*Bowing with profound respect.*) May God protect France and the queen!

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. May God protect the queen! These philosophers are birds of ill omen——

SCENE VI.

THE QUEEN AND MADAME D'ADHEMAR.

THE QUEEN (*seeing Jean Jacques withdrawing him-*

self rapidly). There he goes! How wretched all those men of genius are! I prefer my sceptre to theirs. There are, at least, some roses in my crown to conceal the thorns. (*Interrupting herself.*) By-the-by, our masquerade! Call back the fugitives. I will run to the dairy.

"It is the sultan Saladin
Who keeps in his garden - - - - - -"

How does my striped petticoat become me?

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. In your turned-up sleeves you are admirable.

THE QUEEN. Magnificent! Here comes the Count d'Artois to turn the mill for me. What a charming miller! He may do his best to affect the grotesque; he is always a grand lord.

SCENE VII.

THE QUEEN, COUNT D'ARTOIS.

THE QUEEN. Are you alone, Count?

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS. The Count de Provence is rehearsing his part; he is to be prompter to-night.

THE QUEEN. Is it to be the Tempest?

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS. Perhaps; as for the king, he is amusing himself in his own way; he has locked himself up with a lock of his own manufacture.

THE QUEEN. That's fortunate; he will be happy then.

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS. And we also. Don't you think it droll to see him, whom they call the reformer

of liberty, passing his time in making locks? He is a dangerous husband, there is no door that can resist him.

[*The Count goes to the mill, the Queen to the dairy.*

SCENE VIII.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR, ABBE DE VERMONT.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. Is the abbé going to mount the pulpit? there is his flock wandering about.

ABBE. Let them make a farce of royalty, that may pass; but of heaven, that would be a profanation.

SCENE IX.

ABBE, MADAME D'ADHEMAR, MADAME DE POLIGNAC (*disguised as a country-girl.*)

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. My innocence is something of a load, abbé, but it ought to be proclaimed aloud; you should crown me with a wreath of roses.

ABBE. I am proud of the privilege; in crowning you I will imitate Providence, who has put upon your brow the crown of glory and of beauty.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. No one could be more gallant. What an agreeable surprise!

SCENE X.

THE PRECEDING, THE COUNT DE PROVENCE (*as a shepherd*), THE PRINCESS DE LAMBALLE (*as a shepherdess*).

THE COUNT DE PROVENCE.

" A crook as a sceptre I wield,
Away with the fleurs-de-lis;
The violet fresh from the field
Is sweeter, far sweeter to me."

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. You are right, Count; the violet is adorable——

COUNT DE PROVENCE. As love that hides itself.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. I make no comparisons. I am no poet—not I. I do not improvise: I have neither rhyme nor reason at my command.

THE COUNT DE PROVENCE.

"Game of verse you wish to play,
If play I do, sweet Suzon;
You'll be the rhyme of the lay,
I, the love and the reason."

SCENE XI.

THE PRECEDING, THE QUEEN, THE COUNT D'ARTOIS.

THE QUEEN (*with a shepherd's horn in her hand, addressing Count d'Artois*). Shepherd, it is not time yet to begin making love. Here is your horn, that you left, I will not say where.

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS. In the boudoir of duchess.

THE QUEEN. Call home the cows, it is time to milk them; see, I am all ready; Jeanneton will come with the pails.

THE COUNT DE PROVENCE. Come, daughters of Io, the whitest hands in the world (*speaking to the Duchess de Polignac, and to the Princess de Lamballe*), I mean yours, too, are going to milk you.

THE QUEEN. Be simply a shepherd, and not a poet too. Do you think the cows understand such language? Call Red Coat, call Brownie, call Molly.

Don't you see they are coming already? Miller, is your flour ground? Come, come, we will have a feast on the grass, and a ball in the meadow. Abbé, go get your violin and your bagpipes; tell the Count de Vaudreuil and the Duchess de Coigny to come here. For a good country dance we must have more dancers. (*Seeing the king approach.*) Oh! the king is coming. (*She grows pale, and lets fall her hands by her side.*)

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS. It is ennui that is coming; I will go to the mill.

THE PRINCESS DE LAMBALLE. I will go milk my cows.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. I will go and get crowned with roses.

THE QUEEN (*to Madame d'Adhémar*). Hurry, Jeanneton, we have no time to lose. (*To the Count de Provence.*) Shepherd, let the king pass; in half an hour, we will have our feast upon the grass. Go, compose some couplets.

THE COUNT DE PROVENCE.

"I go wherever she 'll lead,
Singing her beauty that glows;
Oh may not I be the weed,
She treads under foot as she goes."

[*They all go off.*

SCENE LAST.

THE KING, THE QUEEN *concealed.*

THE KING. I thought they were all there, the over-

grown children. (*He takes his seat.*) What have I done this evening?

THE QUEEN (*in a low voice to herself*). Nothing.

THE KING. What did I do this morning?

THE QUEEN (*to herself*). Nothing.

THE KING. I am hungry; but at the Trianon there is nothing but milk and cheese, butter and strawberries; I might as well drink so much water. (*Looking at the flocks of sheep scattered about.*) There are, however, some fine mutton chops fattening yonder.

THE QUEEN. Oh, Jean-Jacques! Jean-Jacques! I am miserable now.

THE KING. My ministers have been advising me a long time in regard to this affair! France, Prussia, Austria .... (*a moment of silence*). France, Spain, England .... (*a moment of silence*). In order to govern this kingdom properly .... (*The king falls asleep*).

THE QUEEN (*withdrawing*). May God protect France!

CREBILLON THE TRAGIC.*

It may excite astonishment that we return to individuals who, at the first glance, appear to be known to everybody, but in no instance have we thought of reanimating one of these figures without the aid of unpublished documents. Up to the present time, moreover, much greater attention has been given to a variation in the text of an author, than to a trait of character in his life. What, however, can be more interesting than the study of the passions of a man whose name has survived him? Our chief study, therefore, in a poet should be, less the work which bears his name, than the movements of his heart. Poetry in action attracts us more than poetry on paper.

About 1670, there lived at Dijon a certain vain notary, proud in anticipation of a title which he coveted. This original was named Melchior Jolyot; his father was an innkeeper; but as soon as he had laid by a little money, he managed to obtain the office of "*Master*

* We may be permitted to state, that if we take a pleasure in retouching the portraits of these celebrated painters and authors, it is because we think we have discovered that, thanks to academic discourses, romantic statements, and colourings of all kinds, all these men who so decidedly mark the past century, have been somewhat disfigured.

clerk-in-chief of the chamber of accounts of Dijon, with the title of registrar of the same." The following year he purchased the small, obscure, and abandoned manor of Crébillon, distant a league and a half from the city.

His son, Prosper Jolyot, was then twenty-two; he was studying law, and on the point of being admitted as an advocate. From the earliest years of his sojourn in Paris, we find that he styled himself Prosper Jolyot *de Crébillon.* The ennobling of the family thus proceeded at a good pace. Many years after, a worthy erudite of Dijon, J. B. Michault, wrote to the president, De Ruffey: "Last Saturday [June 19, 1792], our celebrated Crébillon was buried at St. Gervais. In the invitations to his funeral they gave him the title of *écuyer* [squire]. but what appears more astonishing to me is, that the son has taken that of *Messire.*" Crébillon the tragic ended by deceiving even himself about his imaginary nobility. He wrote, in 1761, to the president de Brosse: "I have always had so little *amour propre* about my descent, that I have neglected very flattering evidences upon that point. M. de Ricard, master of the accounts at Dijon, gave my father one day two titles which he had found. Of these two titles, written in very bad Latin, one was of a Jolyot, chamberlain of Raoul, duke of Burgundy, and the other a Jolyot, chamberlain of Philip the Good. These two titles are lost. I also remember to have heard in my childhood, from old inhabitants of Nuits, my father's

native district, that there were formerly Jolyots, powerful lords in those cantons." Vanity of vanities! Is it possible that under the reign of the *Encyclopédie*, Crébillon, a nobleman by his genius, should have deluded himself with these chimeras and lies, for the truth is, that the Jolyots were, from the fifteeenth to the end of the seventeenth century, honest inkeepers, who sold their wine without adulteration, as they pressed it from the purple or golden grapes of their Burgundian hill-sides. Notwithstanding, Crébillon, finding that nobody contested his nobility, pushed his infatuation so far as to announce one day that his family arms were an eagle of gold on azure field, holding in his beak a lily proper, with stem and leaves of silver. Everything went according to his fancy; his son, by an unexpected marriage, allied himself to one of the highest families of England. The old tragic author could thus pass into the other world, believing that he should leave in this a name celebrated in the arts, and inscribed upon the great heraldic roll of France; but, behold! a century after the creation of this fancy-nobility, founded upon nothing substantial, like most of the titles of the eighteenth century, a *savant* who had nothing better to do, betook himself to investigating the matter, and devoted many years of precious time to this odd labour. By dint of shaking the dust out of the archives of Dijon and Nuits, and rummaging the registers of the notaries of the neighbourhood, he succeeded in recovering the genealogical tree

of Jolyot. Some of the most glorious members of the family were notaries; some others, not the least philosophic, were innkeepers. Shade of Crébillon! pardon this savant, who has thus thrown down the brilliant scaffolding of your vanity.*

Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon was born at Dijon, February 13, 1674. He studied with the Jesuits, like Corneille, Bossuet, and Voltaire. The Jesuits have, it is known, in each of their colleges, a secret register, wherein they inscribe under the name of each of their pupils, notes, in Latin, on their talents and character. The Abbé d'Olivet, at a later date, transcribed the note accorded to Crébillon, *Puer ingeniosus sed insignis nebulo*, that is to say, a youth full of talent, but a great scapegrace. The Jesuits had pedagogues among them, who somewhat abused the right of judging their scholars. Crébillon was simply a playful child, very free in his words and actions.

His father, notary, and afterwards chief registrar of the chamber of accounts in Dijon, desiring that his family should distinguish itself in the magistracy, destined his son to the long-robe, saying that the best inheritance he had to leave him was his example. Crébillon yielded with a tolerably good grace, resolving to have a gay time of it at Paris, while studying law. He accordingly came to Paris, where he divided his time between study, mistresses, and theatres. As

* Revelations concerning the two Crébillons, by M. Amaton, accompanied by documentary evidence.

soon as he was admitted, he entered the office of an attorney,* a friend of his father, who received him in a fraternal manner. One might believe that this man, by the impress of audacity on his face, and of genius on his brow, betrayed his sex, like Achilles when arms were shown to him. Not only was it necessary to inform him that he was a poet, but also to push him into the arena in spite of himself.

The poets have slandered the lawyers a great deal, and they have had cause. Nevertheless, we must do justice to one of them—the only one, perhaps, of all of them who has ever shown a taste for poetry. The worthy man in whose charge Crébillon had been placed, remarked, with intelligent curiosity, the romantic individuality which his pupil preserved amid stamped paper. Crébillon worked little, disputed often, and walked a great deal. He passed his mornings in reading romances, and his evenings in composing them, at least in action, and these are without contradiction the best. He bid fair to become the most turbulent youth of his time; proving himself, in this respect, a true compatriot of Piron and Rameau. He had in him that indescribable frank gaiety, that joyous expansiveness, that amiable carelessness, which savoured so truly of his native soil. He had early inhaled the intoxicating perfume of the Burgundian vine branches. Therefore he made his début by some drinking songs, not of a water-drinking character, like

* He was named Prieur, son of the Prieur celebrated by Scarron.

many an insipid song of the time. The attorney, astonished at his brilliancy, advised him, will it be believed, to *devote himself to poetry*. Crébillon was twenty-seven years old; he refused, saying, that he did *not believe* himself possessed of a creative genius; that every true poet was a god, holding chaos in one hand and light in the other; that, as for himself, he had but a poor pen, destined to defend bad causes in bad style. But the attorney had divined that a spark of creative fire already inflamed the soul of Crébillon. "Do not hesitate to become a poet," he said, "it is written upon your brow, your looks have told me so a thousand times; there is but one man in France capable of succeeding Racine, and that man is yourself." Crébillon derided the idea, but when at work alone by himself on a transcript of a petition to parliament, he recalled to himself the magic of the theatre, the great pictures, the fine speeches, the sublime sentiments, a movement of inspiration seized him, and when the attorney returned, he held out his hand and said, "You have shown me the road, and I will take it."—"Not so fast," said the attorney to him; "a masterpiece is not improvised in three weeks; remain here quietly as if you were still the attorney's clerk; eat my bread, drink my wine, when the work is done you may take your flight."

Crébillon remained therefore at his place; at the same table on which he had written petitions he wrote the five acts of a barbarous tragedy, *Le Mort de*

Brutus, in which, wishing to elevate still higher the character of the Romans, he fairly mounted them all on stilts. The attorney exerted himself to have the piece read at the Comédie-Française. Crébillon, after many an entreaty, was admitted to read his piece; it was unanimously condemned. The poet was of a haughty disposition; he came back to the attorney's house, threw the manuscript at his feet, and cried in despair, "You have disgraced me." According to D'Alembert, "Crébillon was so chagrined, that his rage fell even upon the attorney himself, he looked upon him almost as an enemy, who had counselled him to dishonour himself, swore that he would never again believe him, and that he would never make another verse for the rest of his life."

However, there were in the attorney's house too many good reasons for retaining the poet, who would nowhere else have found so comfortable a dwelling, nor so loyal a friend. He betook himself again to the study of the law; but the deed was done, the poet had broken through the lawyer, and as the attorney never wearied in predicting his success, Crébillon ventured upon another tragedy. He chose for his subject *Idoménée*; this time the comedians accepted the piece, and played it soon after. It had a doubtful success, but Crébillon thought himself sufficiently encouraged to continue on his course.

At the start Crébillon showed his strength; he was compared to Hercules exercising his infant powers in

combating lions. The fifth act of *Idoménée* had appeared unworthy of the first four; at the third representation the poet presented another fifth act, which was admired, and interested the public in a genius so prolific. They were not then habituated to poetical improvisation.

In *Atrée* the youth who had made his début as a scholar rose to the style of a master. The players studied their parts with enthusiasm. The day of its representation the attorney called the author to his bedside, for he was stricken down by mortal disease. "My friend, I have a presentiment that this very night you will be hailed as a son of Corneille by the wits and critics of the nation. I have but few days more to live, I have no longer strength to walk, but be certain that I shall be in my place this evening, that is in the parterre of the *Comédie*." In fact, this worthy man caused himself to be carried to the theatre. The intelligent judges applauded certain passages full of strength and colour, some beauties of great splendour, but at the catastrophe, when Atreus wishes to make Thyestes drink blood, all cried out with horror (Gabrielle de Vergy had not yet eaten the heart of her lover upon the stage). "The attorney," says D'Alembert, "would have left the theatre in affliction if he had waited for the opinions of the audience to determine his own; the parterre showed more consternation than interest; they saw the curtain fall without hissing or clapping, and separated in that ominous silence

which announces in an audience no wish to be present a second time. But the attorney judged better than the public, or rather he judged from the first moment as the public was to judge soon after. The piece ended, he went behind the scenes in search of his friend, who, still very uncertain as to his fate, was already almost resigned to his fall. He embraced Crébillon with transport. "*I die content,*" said he to him, "*I have made you a poet, and I leave a man to the nation.*"

In fact, new beauties were discovered at each repetition. The spectators suffered themselves, with real enjoyment, to be carried away by the terrific interest which the poet inspired. A few days after, the name of Crébillon was famous at Paris and throughout the provinces. It was thought that the soul of the haughty Corneille had come to animate the muse of the author of *Atrée.* The piece at that time was better fi.ted for the English than the French stage. In the fifth act, when Atreus presents to Thyestes the blood of his son, the women recoiled to the back of the boxes in horror; but at the end of the representation, however, the poet received the support of an Englishman, who obtained an introduction in order to congratulate him. "Ah, Monsieur! how your cup of blood made me shudder! We have got a play at last! What beauties, what deep utterances, what sublime horrors!" A critic has made the remark, that, if at the sight of the bloody cup of Atreus the women fainted

away, on the other hand the same women, at the sight of the urn and the agony of Gabrielle de Vergy, stretched their heads out of their boxes for a better view of that horrible sight, like those children who love to hear stories which scare them out of their wits.

The actors, while urging him to hasten to other triumphs, asked him why he had adopted the terrific style? "I had no choice," he answered; "Corneille had taken heaven, Racine the earth; I had nothing left but hell, into which I have thrown myself heart and soul." Voltaire came after Crébillon, and took by turns heaven, earth, and hell. But do we not find in Voltaire a little of Corneille, of Racine, and of Crébillon?

The father of Crébillon was very much irritated at his son's abandonment, as they then expressed it, of Themis for Melpomene. In vain had the attorney pleaded the son's cause, in vain Crébillon addressed this true father of a poet a supplication in verse to obtain his pardon; the chief clerk of the chamber of accounts of Dijon replied that he cursed him, and thought of making a will. To destroy himself utterly in the opinion of this man, who was a blind worshipper of the magistracy, Crébillon wrote to him,—"I am about to marry, if it please you, the most beautiful girl in the world; you may believe me on this point, for her beauty is all she has."

The father answered, "Sir, your tragedies are not

to my taste; your children shall not be mine; commit as many follies as you please; I console myself with the thought that I refused my approbation. Depend more than ever, sir, upon yourself and your works, you are no longer of my family."

Crébillon was none the less eager to marry *the most beautiful girl in the world.* It was the sweet and charming Charlotte Péaget, whom Dufresny speaks of. She was the daughter of an apothecary. It was by frequenting his front shop that Crébillon found his way into the back shop. There was nothing very romantic in this, but love throws a poetic charm over everything it touches. Thus, just before marrying Charlotte, he surprised her one morning giving a sick person flowers of mallows and violets. "My dear Charlotte," said he to her, "we will go together in our Dijonnais mountains, and gather mallows and violets for your father." In the most odious prison there may be always smiling outlets of escape. Crébillon saw not the faded violets which fell from Charlotte's hand; he was already gathering on the green hill-sides violets all redolent of the dews of spring.

Here is an extract copied from the registers of the parish of La Villette, of the entry of Crébillon's marriage. He chose, without doubt, a parish where he was unknown, wishing, for important reasons, as will appear, to conceal the date of his marriage. That which proves it still further is, that in the registry of

his marriage he took the name of Jolyot only, although celebrated under that of Crébillon: "The year of grace 1707, the last of January, the Sieur Prosper Jolyot, of the parish of St. Sulpice, and Demoiselle Charlotte Péaget, of the parish of St. Etienne du Mont, after their mutual consent by us taken, we have given to them our benediction, and they have been by us married, in the presence of witnesses." By this it will be seen that Crébillon lived on the same side of the river as the Comédie-Française. As soon as he was married, he went to live a short distance from the apothecary, and was not long without having occasion for his services, as another extract from the registry of births of the parish of St. Etienne du Mont witnesses: "The year 1707, February 15, was baptized, by me the undersigned priest, Claude Prosper [the future author of the *Sofa*], son of Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon, and of Demoiselle Charlotte Péaget, his spouse, born the day previous, at half-past six in the morning, Place Maubert, and held at the font by Claude François Péaget, master apothecary, and by Demoiselle Jeanne Jolyot, spinster." *

It will be understood without difficulty that Crébillon had no time to ask his father's consent again.

* The Demoiselle Jeanne Jolyot, spinster, godmother of the infant, was Crébillon's eldest sister; doubtless she was not in fear of paternal displeasure by coming to attend the marriage of her brother.

His too beautiful and too charming Charlotte Péaget* was a wife only fourteen days before becoming a mother.

It is from the earliest days of his marriage, and from this retreat in the Place Maubert, that his singular fancy for dogs and cats dates, but, above all, his singular passion for tobacco. He was, without contradiction, the most famous smoker of his day. You may see in the *Ana* that he could not rhyme his tragedies except in a darkened room, full of smoke, with a population of dogs and cats jumping and gambolling about. He was known to close his shutters and light candles at mid-day. A thousand other extravagances are cited, but we must mistrust a little these *Ana* makers, who imagine that they are painting a man when they are only making a caricature.

When M. Melchior Jolyot learned that his son had really married an apothecary's daughter, he well-nigh died of chagrin. The worthy man believed as firmly in his recent nobility as in his religion; this mésalliance made him desperate, and this time he disinherited the poet by a will, in due form. Happily for Crébillon, his father, before his death, came to Paris, curious, in his own despite, to judge for himself the theatrical silliness of that addle-pate his son, who married an apothecary's daughter, and, instead of reaching nobility by becoming an attorney, wrote

* *Le Mercure*, of July 17, 1762, in noticing the death of Crébillon, speaks of her as a young person, very beautiful and *very virtuous*.

fustian for the buffoons of the stage. It might have been urged, in his defence before the parental tribunal, that the apothecary's daughter was one of the most beautiful and charming of women; and it might have been added, that the nobility of which the father dreamed—the nobility of the gown, which was not acquired by a Dijonnais family except after three generations—was not to be compared to that nobility of genius which his son had acquired with so much éclat.

The father of Crébillon arrived in Paris to witness a representation of one of the follies of the wretched prodigal who, in better times, had been his son. *Atrée* had just been reproduced; the father was seized with terror, grief, and admiration. The same evening he ran to his son. He got into a hackney-coach, and was conducted to a house in the faubourg St. Marceau, to which he had been directed. He was received by some seven or eight dogs, who jumped upon his legs as soon as the door opened. Charlotte had only to say a word to call them to order, but the dogs finding, without doubt, a family likeness in the appearance of the stranger, recommenced their gambols and barks about M. Melchior Jolyot, who did not know what to make of this noisy family. Charlotte, who was alone, waiting her husband's return to supper, was greatly surprised at this unexpected visit. At first she thought he was some great personage come to offer the poet his protection, but after stealthily regarding the stranger a few moments, she exclaimed, " You are my

husband's father, or at any rate one of the Jolyots." The old clerk was unwilling to wait for the return of his son to abandon himself to all the emotions of his re-animated heart. He embraced his daughter-in-law with warmth, weeping with joy, and reproaching himself for his harshness. "Yes, yes," he cried, "you are ever henceforth my children, all I have is yours." After a moment's pause, "How is it," he exclaimed, "that with all his successes my son should have condemned his wife to such an abode and such a supper?" —"Condemned! do you say?" murmured Charlotte —"do not deceive yourself, we are happy here." She took her father-in-law's hand and led him into the next room to a cradle shaded by white curtains. "Look!" she exclaimed, drawing aside the curtain with the solicitude of a mother.

The old Burgundian was still more softened by the sight of his grandson. "Are we not happy?" said she. "What do we need more? we live on little; when we have nothing, my father provides for us." They returned to the other room. "What wine is this?" said the old Burgundian, uncorking the bottle destined to moisten the very frugal supper. "What! has my son descended to this? The Crébillons have always drunk good wine."

At this moment the whole population of dogs set to yelping and barking most joyously. Crébillon was coming up stairs. He soon entered, escorted by two dogs, who had followed him from the theatre.

"Two more," said the father; "really it is too many. Monsieur, my son, I have come to beg your pardon; in desiring too much to show myself your father, I have forgotten that my first duty was to love you." Crébillon threw himself into his father's arms. "But, corbleu, monsieur, I cannot forgive you for having so many dogs."—"You are right, but what would become of the poor brutes? It is not good to be alone, saith the Scriptures. No longer being able to live with my equals, I have surrounded myself with dogs. The dog is the solitary man's friend."—"But I imagine you are not alone here," said the father, looking at Charlotte Péaget, and pointing with his finger to the cradle of the infant. "Who knows?" said the young wife, with a touching and melancholy expression; "he speaks so, perhaps, from a presentiment. I fear I shall not live long. He has but one friend upon earth, myself; now, when I am dead—" —"But you shall not die," said Crébillon; "can I live without you?—Father, was I not right in my folly?" He embraced Charlotte, and recited these beautiful verses of the chorus of *Agamemnon*:—

> "Faithful as the dog, the pride of the shepherd,
> Tender as the infant who returns his mother's caresses,
> Fair as the bright morn which follows a day of storm,
> Blessing, as doth the clear brook which the traveller meeteth unhoped for."

Madame Crébillon was not deceived in her presentiments. The poet, who, as is known, died at a patri-

archal age, lived in his widowhood in the most profound solitude for fifty-one years.

Crébillon and his wife accompanied the old clerk from Paris to Dijon, where he presented his son to the inhabitants to their great surprise, as M. Jolyot de Crébillon, the successor of MM. Corneille and Racine to the honours of the theatre. Crébillon had all the trouble in the world to restrain his father's enthusiasm —but he succeeded in doing so, not by his remonstrances, but by his insatiable zeal in drawing upon his father's purse. After staying three months in Dijon, Crébillon returned to Paris. It was time to do so; a month more and the father would have taken offence again and made another will disinherit not the rebellious child, but the prodigal son. Crébillon, in truth, could never keep any money, resembling all beings who toss about imaginary mountains of gold.

Scarcely had he reached Paris, when he was forced to return to Dijon. The old clerk had died suddenly. The inheritance was very difficult to settle. "I have only come here," Crébillon wrote to the eldest of the brothers Pâris, "to accumulate law-suits." He heedlessly suffered himself to be drawn into these suits, in which by little and little the bequests of Melchior Jolyot became the property of the lawyers. "I was a great simpleton," said Crébillon afterward; "I recited the finest passages of my tragedies to these men of law, who exhausted themselves in admiration. Their

admiration blinded me. I did not see that these cunning foxes were eating up my estate—the poets will always be like La Fontaine's crows."

The only part of the estate saved was the little manor of Crébillon, the rental of which the poet settled upon his two sisters. Notwithstanding this, on his return to Paris he entirely changed his mode of life, transferred his Penates to the neighbourhood of the Luxembourg, and lived in magnificent style, as if he had actually inherited a large fortune. It is difficult to explain this act of folly; the report was that he had inherited an estate. Without doubt, he wished to preserve the family honour, or rather vanity, in seeking to the public as to the value of the estate.

True wisdom does not inhabit the world in which we live. Crébillon collected all the superfluities of luxury about him. In vain did his wife (as did the wife of Dufresny at the same time) strive to restrain him on the brink of ruin; in vain she reminded him of the frugal repasts and plain furniture of their small house in the Place Maubert, "*so gay on sunny days.*" "True," said he; "and if we are forced to return to it I shall not complain; what matter if the wine is not so good, if you still pour it out for me?"

Happily, Crébillon in the same year secured victory after victory; the representations of *Electre* were given, which gained the suffrages of all, and astonished even the critics. Crébillon had softened down his

brutalities, and, preserving all his grandeur, had shown himself more natural and more true. *Electre* was followed by *Rhadamiste*, which passed then for a powerful and boldly-drawn masterpiece. There is a certain savage grandeur in the style, which is the true characteristic of Crébillon's genius. It was this tragedy that gave Voltaire the idea that it was better on the stage to strike a strong than a well-directed blow. All the spectators enthusiastically decided that Crébillon delineated hate as Racine did love. The aged Boileau, who was near his end, and would have been glad to have had French literature terminate with himself, said that this success was scandalous. "I have lived too long," he cried, in violent ill-humour. "To what Visigoth do I leave the French stage a prey? The Pradons, whom we have so often ridiculed, were eagles compared to these." Boileau had some resemblance to old Nestor in the Iliad, who said to the Greek kings, "I counsel you to listen to me, for I formerly associated with men who were better than yourselves." The parterre avenged Crébillon for Boileau's bitter critique, for in eight days two editions of *Rhadamiste* were exhausted. Nor was this all; the piece, when played at Versailles, was applauded to the echo.

During the rehearsal of *Rhadamiste*, Crébillon told his friends that he was going to surprise the public by a master-stroke. He was anything but modest, and spoke of his genius as another man would speak of

his wine or his horse. Neve , at the end of the second act he trembled for his success; for if the spectators were surprised, it was that they did not understand what was going on. But at last, when the curtain fell, Crébillon's name was received with acclamation. The vigorous beauties of his pencil had triumphed over his faults of style and composition. The Abbé de Chaulieu, who in his last days was still a man of wit, said that this play of *Rhadamiste* would have been plain enough, had it not been for the *exposition.*

It was the third triumph Crébillon had gained. "Like the gods of Homer," he said, "I took three steps, and I reached the goal." The poet was not long, however, in exhausting all his resources. He borrowed three thousand crowns from Baron Hoguer, who was the providence of literature under the regency; he sold his copyright of a tragedy to a usurer before it was written, wishing to put off as far as possible the moment when he should be forced to change his mode of living. He calculated on the success of *Xerxès*, but that tragedy was hissed. Crébillon was a man of heart and courage. He entered his house with a calm and smiling countenance. "Well?" asked Madame Crébillon, who had been anxiously awaiting is return. "Well, they have hissed my piece. To-morrow we will resume our old habits."

The next day Crébillon returned to the Place Maubert, where he found small apartments near his

father-in-law's, days could still offer to his son a corner of his table. Out of all his splendid establishment, Crébillon only reserved a dozen dogs and cats. As D'Alembert says, "he passed without an effort, like Alcibiades of old, from the luxuries of Persia to the austerities of Sparta, and found himself, as Alcibiades doubtless did not, happier in his latter estate than in his former."

Charlotte Péaget carried to her retreat the same manners she had shown in society. Not once did she repine. Perhaps she appeared still more charming to the hissed and penniless poet. The poor woman concealed their wretchedness from him with touching delicacy. She spread such a charm over the gloomy house, that he believed himself almost rich; like King Midas, she had the art of changing everything she touched to gold; that is to say, of giving everything life and gaiety by her invariable grace. Blessed are the poets who, like Crébillon, have learned that content and beauty are an inexhaustible fortune. Madame Crébillon never complained; she was proud of the poet's glory; she ever encouraged him in his lofty character; she listened with pious resignation to all his dreams of triumph; she knew the right moment to throw herself in his arms, when he declared that he had nothing more to expect from the world. She ventured one day, when there was no money in the house, on seeing him come in with a dog under each arm, to say, "Take care, Monsieur de Crébillon; we have

eight dogs, we have fifteen "—"Well, madame, don't I know it? But see what a pitiful air these two dogs have; could I leave them to die of hunger in the streets?"—"Do you not foresee, Monsieur de Crébillon, that they will die of hunger here? I appreciate your love and pity for the poor animals, but it will not do to make your house an hospital for lost dogs."—"Why do you despair? God does not abandon genius and beauty. There is a report that I am to be admitted a member of the Academy."—"I do not think you will," said Madame de Crébillon; "Fontenelle and La Motte, who are only wits, would not permit a man like you to sit beside themselves, for if you were in the Academy would you not be its king?"

Crébillon made his application for membership in the Academy; but, as his wife had foreseen, Fontenelle and La Motte succeeded in excluding him. Do you know who the glorious individuals were whom these two writers succeeded in getting into the Academy while the author of *Rhadamiste* was waiting at the door? Danchet, Larivière, Massieu, Roquette, Fraguier, Bosvin, Nesmont, Abeille, Roland, Portail, Languet, Duboz, Sallier, Gondrin, D'Olivet, Fleurian, Gedoyn, Alari. It will be seen that small literary piques have always existed in France, as in these later times. A great number of mediocrities slip slily in when the door is half-opened for a man of genius.

Although Crébillon hated libels and satire, he could

not restrain himself when in good spirits from rhyming off, in marotic verse, a fable, very bitter in its application against La Motte, Danchet, and Fontenelle. La Motte was designated under the name of a mole; he had already become blind. Danchet, who was a Hercules in stature, was painted as a camel; Fontenelle, in allusion to his finesse, wore a fox's skin The satire ran all over Paris. The three comrades no longer contented themselves in closing the avenues of the Academy to Crébillon, but sought to ruin him in public estimation. They had no trouble at the court in succeeding in this odious design. Apropos to this, I find these lines in D'Alembert: "It is well to remark, as a trait worthy of preservation in the history of human f llies, that the enemies of Crébillon, not being able to bring any charge against the man, set to work to find in his plays proofs of the perversity of his character. None but a black-hearted man, according to them, could choose the subject he did."

Poor Crébillon, who picked up abandoned dogs and put them under his tattered cloak, wrote as follows in one of the prefaces of *Atrée*: "I have been charged with all the iniquities of this personage, and I am still regarded in some places as a man who is not safe to live with." Can it be believed that men of talent like La Motte and Fontenelle, I do not speak of Danchet, should have persisted in making war upon a poor man, artless and noble-minded, who had injured only the tyrants of his tragedies? La Motte, the royal censor,

had to be entreated a long his approbation to Semiramis: at last, the few protectors of Crébillon having represented to the author of *Inez de Castro* that rather more charity was needful in literary manners, La Motte thus granted his *imprimatur*: "I have read, by order of Monseigneur the Chancellor, Semiramis, a tragedy, by M. de Crébillon, and I think that the death of Semiramis, in default of remorse, may permit one to tolerate the publication of that tragedy." What could be more pleasant than the reasons and the style of monsieur the royal censor?

All these literary thorns only gave the greater charm to Crébillon's home, but we are opening the most touching page of his life.*

One evening, on returning after a discussion more noisy than literary at the Café Procope, Crébillon found his wife very much agitated, pressing to her bosom their sleeping infant: "Charlotte, what has happened?" —"I am afraid," she said, shuddering and looking toward the bed. "What folly! you are afraid of shadows, like a child."—"Yes, I am afraid of shadows: a little while ago I was about retiring: you see I am but half dressed. In drawing aside the curtain I saw a spectre glide past the foot of the bed; I almost fainted, and scarcely had strength enough to reach the child's cradle." —"You are a child yourself, you saw only the shadow of the curtain."—"No, no," said the young wife, seiz-

* We have followed for this account the hints of Baron Hoguer and the Abbé de Laporte.

ing the poet's hand, "it was Death; I recognised him, for it is not the first time he has approached me. Ah! my friend, with what grief and terror I shall lay me down beneath the ground! If you love me as I do you, do not quit me any more for an instant: help me to die. If you are near me, I shall think that I am but going to sleep."

Crébillon, pale and shuddering, took his son and laid him in his cradle. He returned to his wife, embraced her, and in vain sought for words to divert her attention, and lead her to less sombre thoughts. He persuaded her, with difficulty, to go to rest; she slept but little. He remained silent before the bed, praying in his soul, for he believed, perhaps, more than Charlotte, in presentiments. Finding that she was at last asleep, he lay down himself. When he awoke in the morning he found Charlotte, in a partially-raised posture, watching his sleep. He was terrified at her worn, pale look, and the supernatural brilliancy of her eyes—as easily moved as an infant, he could not restrain two tears. She threw herself despairingly into his arms, and covered him with tears and kisses. "It is over," she said, in a broken voice, "see, my heart beats too violently to beat long. But I shall die uncomplaining; for I see well, by your tears, that you will remember me."

Crébillon rose, and ran for his father-in-law. "Alas!" said the poor apothecary, "the mother, who was as good and fair as the daughter, died at twenty-six.

It was the heart that killed the mother, and it will kill the daughter."

All the celebrated physicians were called in; but before they had agreed on a course of treatment, Marie Charlotte Péaget quietly expired at eleven o'clock the following evening. Crébillon, inconsolable, was not afraid of ridicule in weeping for his wife; he mourned for her for half a century, that is to say, until the end of his life. For the space of two years he was scarcely seen at the Comédie Française. He had the air of a man of another age, so much did he seem a stranger to all that was passing about him. It might be said that he still lived with his beloved Charlotte. The once loved dead live in our hearts; he saw and conversed with her incessantly. After fifteen years of mourning he was surprised in his solitude, talking aloud to Charlotte, relating to her his vexations, reminding her of their happy days. "Ah! Charlotte, they all talk to me of my fame, but I think only of thee."

Crébillon, the son, who never displayed a single good impulse in his books, can he never have thought of his mother? she who addressed these sublime words to his father: "If you are near me when I die, *I shall think that I am but going to sleep.*" We may almost believe so. According to a letter of the tragic poet, the author of the *Sofa* was a good son, who came and smoked a pipe with him once a week.

Crébillon's friends, anxious about his prospects, had advised him for a year past to present himself at the

court, where he was acknowledged to be a man of genius. Soon after he lost his wife he abruptly left Paris to reside at Versailles. But as at Paris, so at Versailles, he lived, shut up in his apartment, in the midst of lugubrious visions, so that he was scarcely noticed: the king, seeing only a sort of Danubian peasant, proud in his genius and in his poverty, received him with a coldness almost disdainful. Crébillon, moreover, did not understand his position at Versailles. It was that of an unsophisticated philosopher who had studied heroes, not men. Convinced at last that a *poet at court is of small account*, he returned to Paris to live more nobly in the midst of his poverty and his heroes. He retired to the *Marais*, Rue des Douze-Portes, taking with him only a poor bed, a table, two chairs, and an arm-chair, "in case an honest man should come to see me."

Irritated at having been rebuffed at Versailles, ashamed of having solicited the justice of the king in vain, he wished henceforth to believe in nothing but liberty. "Liberty," he said, "is the sentiment engraved most deeply in my heart." He, unintentionally perhaps, revenged himself in his first work. He commences the tragedy of *Cromwell*: "It is an altar which I raise to liberty." According to D'Alembert, "he read some scenes of it to his friends, in which the aversion of the English for arbitrary power was depicted with savage energy. In consequence he was forbidden to continue the piece." His Cromwell was a rascal

but a rascal whom the whole world would have admired on the stage, from the grand and heroic aspect in which the author would have placed him. From that day he had enemies, but had he not those from the first night of *Electre?* Glory here below has no other attendants.

But still he was without money. By degrees, without having foreseen it, he heard creditors buzzing about his ears like a swarm of wasps. His theatrical copyrights were seized. He, for the first time in France, obtained a decision of Parliament which decreed that works of imagination were not attachable. His theatrical income was therefore saved.

Several years passed without bringing another triumph. Forced by the court to break off his tragedy of Cromwell, he brought out Semiramis. This piece fell almost without a sound, as Xerxès had done a short time before. Believing that the French public would not accustom themselves to the "sombre horrors of the tempests of human passion," he tried to arm himself against his own nature, fight and subdue it. The tragedy of Pyrrhus, which recalled the tender shades of Racine, cost him five years' labour. So rigid was the rule of custom at that time in France, that this worthless tragedy, a painting without style or relief, of grimace rather than expression, was applauded by the spectators with enthusiasm. As a man of talent, Crébillon was not blinded by this triumph of bad taste. "That," said he, "is only a shadow of a tragedy."

Pyrrhus, nevertheless, had only transient success. It was finally understood that it was only an exotic that grew but feebly beneath a foreign sky. Crébillon, in despair at having lost so much time in writing a work which had compromised his reputation, and disgusted by certain shameless coteries who gadded about from one literary café to another, singing his downfall, retired entirely from the world. He went often to the theatre, where he found a few friends to discuss the masterpieces and admire the masterpieces to be written, but at last he gave up going at all.

He lived then without any other friends than his heroes and his dogs, reading passionately the Calprenède, and relating romances to himself. His son testifies to having seen fifteen dogs and as many cats barking and mewing about his father, who spoke to them much more affectionately than to himself. According to Fréron, "He picked up and carried under his cloak all the dogs he found in the street; he bestowed his hospitality upon them with tears in his eyes, but he exacted an aptitude for certain exercises from them. When, after the prescribed term, the pupil was convicted of not having profited by the advantages of education, the author of *Rhadamiste* took him again under his cloak, dropped him at the corner of the street, and ran away sighing.

At La Motte's death, Crébillon at last entered the Academy. He replaced Lériget de la Fage. Thirty years after he was himself replaced by Voisenon. As

he was always a singular, if not an eccentric man, he wrote his opening address in verse, which had never been done before. When he pronounced the line which has not been forgotten—

"Malice has never envenomed my pen"—

he was applauded with enthusiasm and veneration. His fable against his three inveterate enemies was not regarded, for it was more piquant than bitter. From this day, but only from this day, Crébillon was recognised as a man of feeling and a man of genius. It was somewhat late; he had lost his wife, his son spent his time with boon companions, he found himself alone, expecting nothing more from the world. Lazier than a lazzarone, he passed whole years without writing a line. Still his ever ardent imagination projected more barbarous tragedies. Having a prodigious memory, he composed and rhymed five acts without writing a word. Thinking he had produced a masterpiece, he invited a few academicians to his house to hear a new tragedy. He recited the five acts without pausing. Judging that the Areopagus was not mute in admiration of the piece, he said, without petulance, "You see, my friends, I had good reasons for not writing my tragedy."—"Why?" asked Gedoyn. "Because I should have had the trouble of throwing it into the fire. I am going to forget it, which is sooner done."

When Crébillon, as it appeared, was no more to be

dreaded in the world of letters, when it was fully decided that he was a genius in his decline, the same men who had denied his strength thought that it was a cunning way of opposing Voltaire to praise up Crébillon, on condition of one day praising up Voltaire when another dominant star should appear in the horizon. "They went," says a critic, "wishing to humiliate the author of *Œdipus*, of *Brutus*, and of *Zaire*, and sought out, in the depths of his retreat, the old and worn-out Crébillon, who, silent and solitary for thirty years, could no longer be formidable to them, but whom they flattered themselves they could oppose like a sort of phantom to the brilliant author by whom they saw they were eclipsed, as the leaguers formerly drew an old cardinal out of the obscurity in which he lived, to give him the vain title of king, and reign under his name." There were then the Crébillonists and the Voltarians; the former, having possession of all the roads to fame, succeeded for a long time in blinding the public. Voltaire passed for a man of talent, Crébillon for the sole inheritor of the sceptre of Corneille and Racine. The cabal drew up the formula which is still in force: Corneille the grand, Racine the tender, Crébillon the tragic. Crébillon had an immense advantage over Voltaire—he had done nothing for thirty years. His friends, or rather Voltaire's enemies, all said that the author of *Rhadamiste* was completing a tragedy, a marvel of dramatic art, entitled *Catilina*. This work was promised for too long a time, the public

at last crying with Cicero, "How long, O Catiline, wilt thou abuse our patience?"

It is known that Madame de Pompadour, wearied by Voltaire's ambition, passed with all her forces to the camp of Crébillon; it is not forgotten that she received him at court, and recommended him to the care of Louis XV. as a great poet, poor and proud. In his turn, Crébillon was appointed the royal censor.

The war was therefore serious, even on Voltaire's side, who thought himself obliged, in order to gain the victory, to recompose all Crébillon's pieces. Gigantic and puerile courage truly—which must appear almost fabulous to certain writers of our day, who revenge themselves by abuse, for neither Voltaire nor Crébillon ever wrote a line against one another.

Catilina was at last produced with great éclat. The entire court was present at the first representation, and contributed without doubt much to its success. The old poet, encouraged by this, composed the *Triumvirat* with renewed ardour, but it was seen, as afterward at the representation of Voltaire's *Irene*, that the poet was no more than the shadow of himself. The eighty years of Crébillon were respected, the audience applauded with some sympathy, but after a few days the *Triumvirat* was played in solitude. Crébillon had but one thing more to do: he died. The world was then in the year 1762.

Voltaire's enemies did not stop at Crébillon's death.

They had used a shadow for their combat, they now wished to fight upon a tomb. It was decided at Versailles that a mausoleum should be raised "to the first poet of the age." But Louis XV. did not dare to do for Crébillon what Louis XIV. had not done for Molière, Corneille, and Racine. The monument was ordered in a loud voice, but it was whispered to the sculptor not to hurry himself; thus thirty years were needed to complete the work.

Crébillon, it cannot be denied, was one of those men who distinguish themselves in their epoch by their original and marked demeanour. This savage genius, striking us here and there by beauties of a noble mould, by bold outline, brilliant colouring, which most often repulses us by its barbarous manner, was the genius of Crébillon. Animation, grace, and attractiveness, which pre-eminently characterize the genius of our nation, Crébillon never possessed; thus, with all his vigour and boldness, he never succeeded in creating a living work. He has drawn human perversity with a bold and manly pencil; he has exhibited the fratricide brother, the infanticide father, the parricide son; but he has never been able to reach the majestic, almost sacred horror which pervades the Greek tragedy. Nevertheless, Jean-Jacques Rousseau acknowledged that Crébillon alone, of all our tragic poets, recalled to him the grand characteristics of the Greeks; it was merely by this naked terror, for human and philosophic sentiment were wanting to the French Æschylus.

There is a very beautiful portrait of Crébillon by La Tour still in existence. It will be imagined that this man, so terrible in his dramatic fury, was of a dark and sombre mien. He was a fair-complexioned, mild-looking man, with fine blue eyes, which were much admired by the women of his time. In this case the appearance did not denote the man any more than in Florian, who was dark, though a humourist. It must be said, however, that by dint of borrowing the mien of his heroes, and bending his eyebrows in his tragic creations, Crébillon ended by looking a little more like the man of his works. He was besides impatient and choleric, even with his dogs, even with that gentle and poetic Charlotte Péaget, who resigned herself so well to his good or evil fortune, to his days of extravagance and folly when he affected the nobleman, to his days of extreme prudence when he withdrew himself from the world.

CRÉBILLON THE GAY.

Is the younger Crébillon dead? Doubt would be admissible were it not one hundred and thirty-eight years since he first made his appearance in the world. The registry of his death has never been discovered, either in Burgundy, the home of his family, in Paris, where he dwelt, or in England, the country of his wife. In 1770 his death was announced in the papers of the day; but in 1776 he reappeared at a soirée of Madame Geoffrin's. A year after, Monsieur Ducoudray, a literary grave-digger, who only wrote on men scarcely cold, addressed a letter to the public on the death of M. de Crébillon, royal censor: "I have already," says the Sieur Ducoudray, "strewed some flowers on the tombs of Saint-Foix, Gresset, De Belloy, Collardeau; the last especially has drawn from my enthusiasm a prose elegy, or an obituary notice, in the form of a conversation in the Elysian Fields: to-day I have boldly undertaken to sketch the historical eulogy of M. de Crébillon. To enter on the subject: M. de Crébillon has deceased at the age of seventy, having fulfilled his duties as a Christian, with touching edification. He is the author of several works, the *Sofa*—if it is allowable to mention it—among others." Such are the flowers that the Sieur

Ducoudray has strewn upon the tomb of Crébillon the Gay.*

Thus, in 1777, it is clear that Crébillon "died like a good Christian!" However, could we credit Jules Janin, "in 1793, he had the good luck to save his wife, his fortune, and finally himself. I, however, imagine he must have trembled slightly, if he saw Madame Dubarry turn pale in the fatal cart. Madame Dubarry! the last prevailing expression of Crébillon's novels."†

Admitting that Crébillon was alive in 1793, he would have been unable to have saved his wife from the horrors of the Revolution, as, since the year 1761,‡ Madame de Crébillon had become a stranger to all earthly dangers. There is but little doubt that in 1793 Crébillon himself had been long dead; but it is beyond doubt that in 1770 his contemporaries published his death, and several years later he took his daily

* Grimm diverts himself very pleasantly over these flowers, which, after all, are not from the garden of Monsieur Ducoudray: for the Sieur Ducoudray admits having gathered them from a periodical of the day, "and for the reason," he said, "that I like to support my opinion."

† M. Janin says with Voltaire, that accuracy in works of wit is the height of folly.

‡ "My son was born on the 7th of February, 1708. In 1740 he married Miss Stafford, aunt of Lord Stafford, of a family which may be regarded as the first in England—its name is Howard. My son had but one child from this marriage, a boy, who is dead as well as his mother. This is all I know of a family that will soon be extinct."—(From a letter of Crébillon the father, dated January 29th, 1761.)

walk in the Rue Royale, Barrière Blanche, where he resided.

If, like myself, you have an hour to spare; if you would again like to study a little closer the men and women of the eighteenth century, deign to follow me through this past, already much obscured by the paradoxes of the historian, by the shadow Time casts behind him, and by the tall weeds which conceal so rapidly all that has ceased to live. To see, to hear, and to understand the younger Crébillon, this bad and enticing novelist, who spoke so scientifically of the *heart* and *head*, when the heart and head of France were only raised from folly to vice—let us discreetly take part in one of the last soirées of good Madame Geoffrin, the Sablière or Ninon of a former age.

It is in 1776, Madame Geoffrin having been indisposed for some days, has only assembled in her little saloon three or four philosophers, three or four little dogs, and three or four new books which are intended to furnish the philosophers with matter for discussion.

The philosophers are Grimm, Diderot, d'Alembert, and Mademoiselle Clairon; among the books scattered upon the mantel, we notice *l'Ecole des Pères*, a novel by Rétif de la Breton; *Coriolan*, a wretched tragedy performed during the week; some tales in verse, such as *La Tentation*, by the Marquis of St. Marc, and Madame de Turpin's *Les Heures de Cythère*. Although it is spring, old Madame Geoffrin receives her habitual guests before a good fire; even that does not

prevent her from wearing that old pelisse of rose-coloured taffetas, the fur trimming of which was a present from the Empress of Russia. "Grimm," said suddenly Madame Geoffrin, dropping her lap-dog on the floor, "have you read that absurdity which bears the title of *Les Heures de Cythère?*" Grimm took the book, and turning the leaves through his fingers, "It is a miserable work," said he, smiling, "though printed at Paphos with the privilege of the Graces."—"To whom do you attribute this rhapsody?" asked Madame Geoffrin. "Some give it to the Countess de Turpin, who was, as you know (after Madame Favart), the late Abbé de Voisenon's best friend; but Madame de Turpin herself attributes the work to a young count whom she has condescended to matronize."—"Perhaps there are some means of uniting these two opinions; there are certainly many things in these poems, which it would have been infinitely more natural to have found in a tête-à-tête, than to have found alone with either party."—"It appears," said D'Alembert, "that this Madame de Turpin is preparing an edition of twenty volumes of the works of her friend the late Abbé Voisenon."—"That will be a pretty butterfly crushed in a folio," said Diderot; "in truth, we have done well in undertaking to build up something durable among ourselves, like the *Encyclopædia;* for in looking at all these card-castles built by the Voisenons, the Dorats, the Crébillons. . . . ."

On the instant the door opened, and there appeared

as if by magic a pale face, almost buried in a powdered wig. This ghostly personage advanced gravely toward the mistress of the house. "Madame, permit a man who has retired from the world, to remind you that he has loved and cherished you before all other women."—"If I do not deceive myself," said Madame Geoffrin, with a perceptible tremor in her voice, "it is Crébillon."—"You have said it, madame. It appears," he continued, turning toward Grimm, "the gazetteers have written my obituary. M. Grimm is a witness. I have quitted my grave expressly to correct the date of my death. How are you, Diderot? How are you, D'Alembert? Beautiful Clairon, permit me to kiss your feet. Now, M. Grimm, take this seat by me, and listen to my troubles."

With increasing surprise, Grimm approached the fireplace; Crébillon ensconced himself in an armchair; the company formed a circle round him. "Monsieur de Grimm, you write the *Literary and Philosophical Gazette* of our day for the use of the sovereigns of the north, and such gentlemen of our own country, who can afford to pay you an annual subscription of one hundred crowns: this is well; you are perfectly right in so doing: and am I not likewise right in coming to rectify an error which concerns me specially?"—"One cannot come too far for that," remarked Diderot. "I have become an entire stranger to the things of this world. All whom I loved are long since dead; my father, my wife, my son, my

friends. I had formerly another friend, my Fame, which somewhat consoled me for the annoyances of this world: my Fame itself has not been able to survive me. Other times, other customs, other novels. It is the eternal law, I cannot complain. Dead as I am, buried, as M. de Grimm has said, in the neglected leaves of my works, I have the weakness to return from time to time to see what is passing in the world. There is in my neighbourhood of the Rue Royale a chevalier, De Vieilsac, a subscriber, or sub-subscriber, to the correspondence of M. de Grimm, whom I have only known about a year. We meet at a pharo-table, where I go every Friday, under the name of Sir Stafford, for I no longer care to prove that I am still among the living. The Chevalier de Vieilsac has often spoken to me of the two Crébillons, as having known them in their day. Thanks to the correspondence of M. de Grimm, he knows that I am dead: it was through him that I heard the news myself."

On this Crébillon drew from his pocket a manuscript sheet of Grimm's Journal (March 1771). "There," said he, "is my obituary notice:"—

"It is nearly two months since we lost M. Claude Jolyot de Crébillon, royal censor, celebrated by the memory of a father whose tragedies long shed a halo over the French stage. The son had a transitory celebrity; but it is long, very long, since he had the misfortune to find he had survived himself." So far, said Crébillon, there is nothing to be said. M. de Grimm

shows himself even benevolent in his appreciation of my works, but is there much generosity when he winds up in these words?

The auditors leaned over the spectre with the most lively curiosity: "M. de Crébillon bore no resemblance to his writings; his conversation was neither very easy nor very sparkling; he used long phrases. and put them forward with pretension; he bore this character in the intimacy of the coteries where he lived, almost habitually; the Collés, the Monticours, his oldest friends frequently took him to task on account of the extreme reserve and the great airs of propriety and dignity which he affected even in their maddest orgies."

"Clairon! Clairon!" exclaimed the ghost, "you knew me when I wrote *les Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit*, in the time when you were Venus at the Opera. Speak out the truth, was I not an agreeable guest after supper?"—"Adorable!" said the tragic actress, eyeing this strange spectre from head to foot; "you made less noise than the others; you left them to sing and argue; but when some witty saying, very delicate and very pointed, circulated, every one said at once, Ah! Crébillon is here."—"Come, come," said Madame Geoffrin, taking the hand of Crébillon, "you are an old coquette, everybody has done you justice, for in your day you were read and loved."—"If M. de Crébillon," said Grimm, bowing, "can find leisure in the other world to turn over my journal, he will discover

that I have been of the opinion of Sterne, Garrick, and Fielding, who have placed him in the front rank of French novelists."—"Say no more about it; but as in your editorial character you are so well posted in all that passes, tell me if the Abbé de Voisenon is still of this world."—"Oh, I can be responsible for his epitaph—he died last year."—"For the twentieth time," said Diderot.*—"I am sorry for it; for I have an account to settle with him; he has likewise written a very disrespectful obituary, as if he had written of some saint of his church or his acquaintance."

Crébillon drew from the skirts of his coat the new edition of the *Literary and Critical Anecdotes on the best known Authors*, and read in a loud voice:—

"'Crébillon, the father, had genius but no wit; Crébillon, the son, had wit but no genius.'

"Thus far it is marvellous, but wait a little.

"On the death of his father, Madame de Pompadour got him a pension of two thousand livres from the privy purse, which enabled him to pass his life in idleness about the streets of Paris, speaking ill of women and the nobility.'†

* It is known that the Abbé de Voisenon was for sixty years at the point of death, as they said at that time.

† Beauvoisin did not show any more amiability toward Crébillon, in her notes to Bachaumont: "Pedant, miserable pedant, you are such a pedant, so grave, so dry, and so formal, that I will not sup with you at Monticour's. You are nothing but a broom-stick dressed up."

But these lines are applied to Crébillon in his old age. The

"Do you hear, about the streets of Paris?"—"Look you, Crébillon," said Madame Geoffrin, "your manner of living was never understood; you would be seen every day successively for six weeks; then, sometimes, six years would elapse without your even being heard of. Except," continued she with emphasis, "through your 'sanctions' as royal censor."—"Since you no longer belong to this world," said Mademoiselle Clairon, "you can tell us what you formerly did in it."

"It is very simple, or rather very extravagant. My father lived like Socrates, and I like Alcibiades; my father wrote sombre tragedies, and I rose-coloured novels."—"We know all that; it is the details we want."—"I have spent my life laboriously in losing my time. I do not wish you to waste yours in listening to me."—"Come, do not wait to be pressed, for a digression more or less."—"You have said it; life is only a digression of nature."—"Let us have no set phrases, or I will relate myself all the curious things I know about you."

Crébillon looked at the actress, took her hand, and said, with the smile of a faded pastel, "I have no hesitation in speaking before you as before our good Mother Geoffrin; but I am frightened at all these great encyclopedic ears, which are open alongside of me. Will Diderot and D'Alembert understand a word of what they call my jargon?"—"Did I not

memoirs of the time, those of Marmontel among others, represent him as a very amiable, very witty, and very lively companion.

write *Les Bijoux Indiscrets?*" exclaimed Diderot. "Am I not the son of Madame de Tencin?" said D'Alembert, with a melancholy expression.—"Well, then, listen, if it will amuse you."

When they were all seated in a circle before the fire Crébillon began thus:—

"I was born, which, as my friend Sterne said, is, perhaps, the only thing I have not cause to doubt; I came into the world in the Place Maubert, in 1707. I remember that my first friends were some dogs and ravens. My father was my teacher; from which cause I knew how to smoke before I understood Greek. Crébillon the Tragic had likewise his hours of gaiety; he lived somewhat like a true gentleman, and somewhat like a sage, and I have lived somewhat like him.

"I have always cultivated the idea that originality was the true touchstone of all genuine wit; we must convince ourselves that in following recognised principles we are never but ordinary men; that mankind only admire that which strikes them, and singularity alone produces this effect. We cannot therefore be too eccentric; that is, we cannot affect too much to differ from every one, in both our manners and our ideas. An eccentricity, which is ours only, does us more honour than a merit which we share with another. This explains why I wrote frivolous novels under the same roof where my father composed *Catilina*."—"Monsieur Crébillon the Gay," interrupted Diderot

"you are a great philosopher."—"You are too well acquainted with the history of my father for me to dwell long upon it. He had the misfortune to lose my mother after seven years of a very happy marriage. He was never consoled. Madame de Villeneuve, too celebrated by her love adventures, installed herself at his house to dissipate his grief. She remained there more than thirty years without succeeding. My father loved dogs, cats, and ravens, and Madame de Villeneuve was for him but an additional beast. As soon as she put her foot in the house I beat a retreat in all haste.

"I was just twenty; I scarcely knew anything of life, and wished to learn everything at once.

"I had known Pont-de-Veyle in the green-room of the Comedié-Française, where I went but seldom. There existed then a little academy formed of young noblemen very much in love with literature and opera-girls; among whom were Maurepas, Caylus, Surgères, Duclos, Voisenon, Monticour, and Pont-de-Veyle. Collé had been admitted on account of his gaiety, and they were willing to admit me because I was the son of my father.

"I entered, then, into the world through folding doors, thrown wide open. I feared at first the reproaches of my father; but on our first meeting he congratulated me warmly upon my reception at the *Académie de ces Messieurs*. Such was the name it bore; and as he was in funds that day, he gave me twenty louis with much good grace.

"You have forgotten, O grave D'Alembert! you who have judged without hearing us, what were the works of this academy which left me no desire to belong to the other. We made pageants which were performed in the saloons, especially in those of the ballet-girls. It often occurred that we performed ourselves on the stage at the fair. It was, if my memory serves, in the fine carnival of 1730. Moreover, we made verses on all grotesque, strange, serious, and droll events that agitated France. It was a rhyming gazette in the style of Scarron. Of all this wit, of all this gaiety, of all this licentiousness, there only remain those two celebrated volumes entitled *Le Recueil de ces Messieurs.**

* We find among other works in the *Recueil de ces Messieurs Ballets*, like *Les Caractères de la Folie*, tales like *Acajou et Zyrphile*, letters imitated from the *Lettres Persanes*, and from the *Amusements sérieux et comiques* of Dufresny, oriental tales, dialogues of the dead.

Boucher, who belonged to the society of *these gentlemen*, sometimes *illustrated* their fancies. Here are the inexplicable subjects of ten prints for which Duclos, Caylus, Surgères, and Crébillon, each wrote a tale. Is it not a curious task to study in them the imagination of the tale-writers of a hundred years ago?

I.—The frontispiece represents the author in his dressing-gown, writing in his study, surrounded by frolicsome sprites, rats, porcelain figures, butterflies, and smoke.

II.—The prince Percebourçe, the hero of the tale, is represented taking a walk in the path of ideas. He is dressed in the French style, according to the fashion and custom of the time (1740).

III.—The prince Percebourçe is in conversation with the fairy of the scarf who has come out of a gooseberry that he has just picked.

"Would it not, I ask you, have been wise to have collected all the works of our Academy, and have transmitted them to posterity, as they have done for the Academy of Sciences? And again where is the use of preserving the dull papers of the learned when the science of to-morrow throws into oblivion that of to-day?

"In those days I displayed boldly my face of twenty. There is a portrait of me by Boucher,* which repre-

IV.—Two little female dwarfs, found in another gooseberry, are trying to give a cap to the prince, who is in great embarrassment.

V.—The prince, seated in the same path of ideas, going to eat an apricot, produces from it the head of a young princess, of a rather sad and languishing expression.

VI.—Percebourçe, having sought for the body of this princess, finds it with some difficulty, and fits on the pretty head and the little hands that belong to it.

VII.—The fairy Vicieuse marries Prince Percebourçe to the Princess Pensive.

VIII.—The princess Pensive is arrested by the giant Borgne.

IX.—The fairy Lutine takes care of a young child called the Prince des Coudes, and who appears destined to be the lover of Jaunillaune, or the yellow infant, the daughter of Pensive and Percebourçe.

X.—Pensive upsets a magic glass, which draws down upon her the maledictions of the enchanter Grossourcils and the fairy Robinet.

* There is also a portrait of Crébillon the younger in the Museum at Versailles. According to this portrait, which must be by one of the Vanloos, Crébillon is scarcely more the man of his novels than his father was the man of tragedy. This head, at once frivolous and grave, probably derives its expression of gaiety from his character of royal censor. In fact, could Crébillon the younger, who was above all a man of wit, regard seriously that ludicrous office which obliged him to write on a new edition of the works of Corneille, or a new translation of the works of Homer, "*I have read, by order of*

sents me in all the extravagance of youth. I was certainly not as handsome as the Apollo of Phidias; but more than one woman found me much more loveable than a statue of Phidias. I wished to follow the profession of letters, and had even produced some frivolous stories. I soon learned that before writing romances it was necessary to make them. We never relate well the passions of another but through the remembrance of passions that still agitate our hearts.

"I therefore entered in campaign to make romances before writing them. All the saloons and all the theatres were open to me; and I must confess, though not to my shame, that the first time I found myself tête-à-tête with an actress who had been tête-à-tête with all the world, I trembled like a scholar who did not know his lesson.

"A few days after I fell in love with Madame de Margy. Surgères had presented me to her as a man to whom was destined all the conquests of wit and of the heart. She was majestically beautiful; though dressed without coquetry, she did not neglect ornament; she repaired with care the charms that near forty years had stolen from her. Patient in her vengeance as in her pleasures, she knew how to abide her time.

"We met, *not* by chance alone, before the fire one evening in her saloon, while all her guests were en-

my lord-chancellor, the new translation of the ILIAD (*or the new edition of the* CID), *and I find nothing therein to prevent their being printed?*"

gaged at ombre. I was going to open my heart to her, but at her first glance my timidity suddenly seized me. Women who are loved have positively the power of the gods, for their lovers always tremble in their presence. Perceiving my trouble and embarrassment, Madame de Margy had the wit to point out the way to me, in speaking of a comedy that then held the stage. 'I find,' she said, 'in this play many parts handled with skill. There is, above all, a declaration of love, which is extremely delicate.'—'I was likewise,' I replied, 'struck with this declaration, and I give the author the more credit, as I believe this situation very difficult to manage well.' A few phrases more and my declaration was made. 'If I was younger,' she said, 'I might believe you; but I am thirty-seven.'—'It is not that in you, madame, that charms me the least. When a woman is young, she is only sensible of the charm of inspiring passions. The merit of attaching one heart for ever is not worth that of enchaining several; more in suspense than fixed, always given up to caprice, she thinks less of him who loves her to-day than of him who will love her to-morrow. She is always expecting pleasure, but never seizes it. Often she knows as little the one who quits as the one who succeeds: perhaps, could she have kept him longer, she would have loved him. A young woman depends less upon herself than upon circumstances, and these are so many and so unforeseen, that it is not astonishing if, after several adventures, she has neither

known love nor her heart; but when she feels that youth is giving place to solitude, she attaches herself with all her strength to the last green branch that she has seized; all that her conquest has cost makes it precious to her. Constant, for she would lose by not being so, her heart by degrees becomes accustomed to the same sentiment. When sought by the crowd she abandoned her heart to them; now that a solitary lover remains, she attaches herself strongly to him. Come, come; what is thought a woman's last caprice is more often her first passion.'

"In speaking thus to the countess, I had hit upon the truth: I was the last resource of this till then unconquered heart. For one who wished to be a novelist, I could scarcely have done better; for Madame de Margy, having seen much, could impart much. In passing through the world, she had studied it; and it often happened that she dictated and I wrote.

"Of what use to relate to you her tragic fury when I wished to leave her? A woman at twenty-two loses a lover without a thought, at thirty she weeps, at forty she abandons herself to despair. A young heart is like the spring, it forgets the flowers of yesterday in those of to-day; but when autumn comes and a blossom resists the November blasts, it is no longer a flower that fades, but an entire life. An order from the lieutenant of police, which consigned me to Vincennes, for having written, under the title of *l'Ecumoire*, a satirical romance against the Cardinal de Rohan, the

Bull *Unigenitus*, and the Duchess of Maine, rid me of Madame de Margy. I did not remain long in this prison, which was, as you all know, a palace for captives.

"I returned again to the street St. André des Arts, and continued to see the best company—ruined gentlemen living upon their neighbours, rich actresses living with ruined gentlemen. My distinguished friends commenced to reach high preferments; instance Surgères, Maurepas, Voisenon.

"It was in 1740. One day in the afternoon I was engaged in literary labour, when my valet informed me that a lady, closely veiled, wished to see me. I went to meet her with a kind of presentiment. 'Mon Dieu! sir,' she said to me, when seated on the sofa of my little saloon, 'nothing can be more simple; I have come from London to offer you my hand.'*

* "There happened to him," says M. Jules Janin, "a piece of good luck, which he had not even imagined in a novel. He was a prey to all the well-grounded anxieties which gave so many charms to the literary life of that time, when, one morning, an English lady requested to see him. She was a pretty young lady, rich, and of good family, who had been seized with a violent passion for *Les Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit*. She gave her fortune and her hand to Jolyot de Crébillon the younger."

The *Souvenirs de la Marquise de Créquy* tell us in their turn, "One day he saw the arrival of a handsome lady, who told him, among other things, that she had read the *Sofa;* that she felt for him, M. de Crébillon, the author of so fine a work and royal censor, a sentiment of admiration, esteem, and unconquerable love; that she had come from England on purpose to ask him in marriage; and that she was the eldest daughter of Lord Stafford; which was the exact truth

"Though habituated to all sorts of strange adventures, I confess I must have exhibited great surprise. Fortunately the lady had raised her veil. I had been able to judge that she was handsome as I had already remarked her grace and distinction. 'Madame, you see me confounded by so much happiness; although marriage has never been among my habits, permit me to throw myself at your feet, and kiss the hand you deign to offer me.' In fact I threw myself, completely bewildered, at the feet of Miss Stafford. 'Madame, will you explain . . . ?'—'Nothing is more simple. My fortune is in my own hands; I had resolved to bestow it only with my heart; but where to bestow my heart was the difficulty. I have waited and I have sought; I should have waited and have sought still, had I not met with one of your works. You recall, without doubt, for you have infused in it so much of yourself, *Les Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit*, a delicious book, which has but one fault, which is, that the heart has too much head. After having read it twenty times, I ordered my horses,

in every particular. As she was a single woman, she became Lady Crébillon in the course of a fortnight."

"It was not," says Grimm, "until after the death of this tender heroine, that the circumstances of a marriage so romantic were known; thus everything in the world is ruled by chance. The author of a licentious tale inspires an ardent passion in a noble lady, who is willing to cross the sea in search of him; and the lover of the new Héloise, of all lovers the most passionate and most faithful, is compelled to marry his servant-maid."

embarked at Dover, took the post at Calais, and arrived yesterday at Paris. I lost an entire day (for I should have seen you yesterday) in recruiting myself. and in finding you out. Heaven be praised! you are there such as I imagined you, young, witty, distinguished.'

"Thus spoke Miss Stafford. I was so little prepared for an adventure of this nature, that I knew not what to say. I gazed into her beautiful eyes, sparkling with love and pleasure. Another in my place would have imagined that he was the dupe of an adventuress without heart or money; for my part I felt at once that Miss Stafford was really Miss Stafford, that is to say, one of the handsomest, richest, and most adorable young ladies of Great Britain.

"We were not married until after a delay of six weeks. Miss Stafford wrote to her father, who was only softened at the fifth or sixth letter: he ended by yielding, not because I was the author of celebrated works, but because I was the son of M. Crébillon, a Burgundian gentleman,* member of the French Academy, author of *Electre* and *Rhadamiste*.

"Moreover, the six weeks' delay was not time lost. I passed all my days at the Hotel of London, at the feet of Miss Stafford. As soon as her father answered favourably, she begged me to conduct her to mine, which I did eagerly. Would you believe it, the good

* We have seen in the history of Crébillon the Tragic how this nobility was an illusion.

man, whom I have always loved so profoundly, found, like Miss Stafford, that *nothing could be more simple* than our marriage? It is true that then more than ever my father read the novels of *La Calprenède*, or imagined others of the same style. There was one person even more romantic than Miss Stafford, it was Crébillon the Tragic. As for me, I seemed in a dream; it was in vain that I saw, heard, touched Miss Stafford. I could scarcely believe in my happiness; even to-day I can hardly believe it; at times it seems to me a romance I have not had time to write.

"You can well imagine that at that time money was scarce with me. My tales and novels sold well; they were reprinted every year, and translated into foreign languages; but, thanks to the reprints and the bad faith of the publishers, I had scarcely two or three thousand livres income, barely enough to live with on condition of dining out. The Abbé de Bernis, now a cardinal, was then in society on precisely the same footing.

"I informed Miss Stafford of my poverty, but was careful not to question her upon her fortune. It was only on the reading of our marriage contract that I learned the amount. One hundred thousand sterling! To me it seemed an epitome of the mines of Golconda and Peru. But Miss Stafford, soon Madame Crébillon, was far more handsome than rich.

"You must remember how all Paris raised its head in excitement on the news of this marriage. I might

have sought for happiness in these rumours of worldly pride; but I understood that it is necessary in this world to conceal our happiness, if we do not wish to lose it. Love prefers silence and shade. We fled from the brilliant light of day; there were without doubt persons jealous of me among the high dignitaries of state, who saw with terror a man of wit become a millionnaire. I received one morning a letter conceived in these terms:—

"'We, Lieutenant of Police, notify M. Claude Jolyot de Crébillon, that, by a decree of the chancellor, we have been ordered to signify to him that he is exiled as the author of a book considered injurious to public morals, entitled *Les Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit*. By these presents the said Sieur de Crébillon is forbidden to remain longer in Paris. The royal clemency permits him otherwise to inhabit any province in France he may please to select.'

"Indignant at this order, I vainly ran to my friends and demanded justice. The most devoted feared an explosion that would be fatal to me; they advised me to leave in silence, assuring me that at the end of a few months I should see the end of this ridiculous exile. I departed with my wife and Lord Stafford for England. I was besides desirous to study the men and things of that country. It was at London I made the acquaintance of Sterne, Fielding, and Garrick: three celebrated men whose friendship I have since always retained. After a sojourn of nearly two years

we returned to France. I presumed I had regained the right of living in Paris; but I was informed that measures of extreme severity would be employed against me. Madame de Pompadour found my novels too licentious! It became necessary, therefore, to turn our course from Paris. We went at once to Bourbonne-les-Bains, at which place my father-in-law wished to pass the summer.

"Toward the commencement of November we travelled in Burgundy, stopping at the different towns, visiting the churches and curiosities, and were well received in the different châteaux. My father had joined us at Dijon. In vain our friend, the President de Brosse, exerted all his high and powerful influence to open Paris to us. I was constrained to consider it as a favour to be allowed to live in Burgundy.

"In passing through Sens, six weeks previous, my wife, forcibly struck with the imposing beauty of the cathedral, and seduced by the attractive appearance of certain houses buried in trees, exclaimed, with a smile of rapture, "Ah, it would be happiness to live here!" When I saw that I must perforce resign myself to exile, I led Madame Crébillon to Sens.

"During five years, which passed like a dream, and yet have effaced all the other years of my existence, we were happy in that city. My wife had given me a son, which, like herself, had prevented me from perceiving I was in exile. We inhabited a large house not far from the cathedral. We rarely left it, the garden

affording us long and quiet walks. Occasionally, however, I had glowing recollections of Paris. I stretched my arms toward my past life, toward our wild pleasures, our maddening orgies; so true is it that happiness, be it the greatest, is incapable of satisfying the heart of man. Life is agitation; it is the combat, the struggle, the defeat, or the victory of each day. It is only flowers and trees that can live upon the sun and air. To admit the truth, I had allowed myself to be seized with ennui, and it was only after I had quitted Sens that I discovered that I should always have remained there. I wish to return there some day. It is thirty years since I made myself the promise to do so; but who shall I find there now?

"You have seen that, until now, *Les Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit*, after having given to me a beautiful wife and a large fortune, provoked against me an order of exile. Would you believe that the author of *Les Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit* was appointed to be royal censor? Contradiction of contradictions! why should we be surprised? We live under the reign of women.

"Madame de Pompadour, whom my novels had first shocked, called me to her, and showed me an unbounded confidence. 'You have seen the marchioness,' said Madame de Crébillon to me one evening. 'She is charming,' was my reply; 'that woman will always be twenty; what grace, what wit, what seduction!' The daughter of Lord Stafford turned pale,

and repulsed my hand. 'What fancy has seized you? Do you imagine I am going to fall in love with Madame de Pompadour?'—'You already love her,' said she to me, in a faltering voice,—'You are always romantic, dear lady. Know that Madame de Pompadour never caused but two passions, first her husband, then the king.'—'What matters it?' she said sadly; 'you are going to the court; all is lost for me—let us speak no more of it.'

"I did not regard this seriously; I even amused myself a little with the trouble of Madame de Crébillon. Shortly after, my servant, much agitated, came to seek me at the royal printing establishment. 'Si-i-r, I do not know how . . . . . Madame de Crébillon . . . . . !' —'Go on, speak!'—'She has gone with her son in a postchaise.'—'Gone!' I flew to the hotel, where they handed me a letter, not a line of which have I forgotten.

" 'Farewell! for you have already forgotten me. Happiness is but for a season. Winter has come for me. I go with my son; perhaps he may return to you, but he will return alone. I pardon you on account of the pleasures, so vivid and so pure, that you have given me. Thanks to you, I have realized the dream of my youth. I have been too handsome and too well loved to dare to grow old before you. I prefer leaving you a remembrance worthy our bright days. Life is a romance for poets and lovers: you have been a poet and a lover. Now that you are royal censor, private

counsellor of an accidental queen, it is ended. I do not tell you where I go; you will not follow me; besides, do I know myself? 'ANNA STAFFORD.'

"There it is, word for word, that strange letter. I have preserved it religiously; I have read it a thousand times, although I knew it by heart; but in reading it again I fancied I saw pass before me the pale, sad wife, whom I loved so much.

"Whither had she gone? I flew to England. I saw Lord Stafford, who had neither seen nor expected his daughter. During my stay there, Lord Stafford received a letter from my wife, dated at Paris; she complained, but without explaining, of an acute suffering, but more particularly of the illness of her child. I took the post again, and on returning to Paris endeavoured in vain to discover the retreat of Madame Crébillon. Six months after, a friend of Lord Stafford came to inform me that I had lost both my wife and my son. I was never able to ascertain where or how Madame Crébillon died; for the friend of Lord Stafford knew no details; and Lord Stafford having scarcely survived his daughter, there was no one to interrogate. Perhaps she died at Paris close to me; or perhaps in crossing the sea, as she always had a presentiment that she would die at sea.

"What can I tell you more? Crébillon the Gay was thenceforth only Crébillon the Sad. I mourned my beloved wife. You know the rest. I tried, by means of some bad novels, to rise again to the surface;

but, alas! Fame is like Fortune—she passes by and waits for you no more. One by one, my friends have all died. Without thinking of retiring from the world, I have perceived, for some years past, that I was like a stranger alone in Paris. There are yet some houses like yours, good old Geoffrin, where I have elbow-room. But what do you wish? I can no longer habituate myself to the new gods which rise up every day. We have but a day; mine has passed. After all, have not M. de Grimm, the Abbé de Voisenon, and others, the right to write my obituary? I am already dead! Sooner or later, what matters it?

"I perceive I have somewhat wearied you with this recital, which, at least, is worth one of my novels. The romance of the heart is sometimes related, but never written. Adieu!"

Kissing the hand of his old friend, Crébillon rose. "Come, Clairon, let us embrace for the last time. Thirty years ago I would have kissed you without asking leave, for in those days you only permitted that which was taken. Gentlemen philosophers, profound thinkers, latitudinarians, look to your works. There is here below a last friend who never abandons us at the last hour, and who always consoles and causes us to love the sombre solitude of the tomb. That friend is Religion."

"Amen," said Diderot, bowing.

The ancient royal censor departed without another word; an old servant attended him in the antechamber;

an old carriage, much dilapidated, was waiting for him in the street.

This singular and unexpected appearance made considerable noise in the literary world. Mademoiselle Clairon spoke of it twenty years after with vivid recollection. In all probability Crébillon did not long survive this visit; however, as I have already said, the precise epoch of his death has never been ascertained. He may possibly have gone to England, or may have gone to pass his latter days in the environs of Paris; or he may have desired to see once more the cathedral of Sens. Of what consequence is it? It is not the history of his death we wish to study here.

What shall we say of his novels which no one reads? They are in their witty falsehood the true and living expression of a period abandoned to wit and falsehood. Crébillon had studied in the school of Fontenelle and Marivaux; it is, however, asserted by his friends, that his first tale was written with the idea of parodying the spun out sentimentality of the day. If such was the case, he only succeeded in parodying himself in the end. His true claim to reputation consists in having created a style; and it is something to have created even a bad style in literature, when there are so many who are but the parrots to those who have preceded them. The manners and passions delineated in his works undoubtedly existed only in the society of "*those gentlemen.*" There are there, as in the other novels of Crébillon, more portraits and fancy sketches

than scenes from nature; but it is impqssible, without injustice, to deny all the grace, all the brilliancy, all the delicacy of the touch of Crébillon. Few novelists have written more truths on the spirit of the world and the character of women. Sterne says, in his letters to Eliza, "Before I attempted to write I had read Rabelais and Crébillon." Is not this praise that would be envied by more than one high and powerful novelist, of whom no one will speak a hundred years hence?

Moreover, in the time when Crébillon wrote, nearly all the great wits wrote in almost the same style. Voltaire acknowledged his libertine as well as his philosophical tales. Diderot owned the *Bijoux indiscrets.* The grave President Montesquieu, who did not wish to put his name to the *Persian Letters,* put it to the *Temple de Gnide.* Crébillon was born under the Regency, when the French mind wanted that dreamy sentiment, the poetry of the soul and of nature, which raises us above those who have only had wit.

LA MOTTE.

AN INNOVATOR OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

In 1693 there was represented at the theatre of the Comédie-Italienne, for the first time, a piece styled *The Originals.* The author was a young adventurer who was an earnest seeker after all that was new under the sun, even at the expense of common sense. His name was Antoine Houdard de la Motte. He had pursued his studies under the Jesuits at Paris, listening rather to his natural instincts than to his masters; therefore he learned but little Latin and less Greek: he already protested against the Greeks and Romans. To make amends, however, he had been a great dreamer; he had read Corneille with admiration; he had found the ancient poets by no means to his taste; he had vowed to change the world's opinion in this matter. With these fine views in prospect, he determined not to follow those of his family, who wished to make an attorney of him. As in those days there were no journals, the theatre was the only field for the innovator. After having played comedy amid a circle of friends, he made his first appearance as dramatic author in a strange piece made up of an odd mixture of Italian and French prose. On the day of represen-

tation he calculated upon a great success. This success was to be the source of his fortune and his glory. With a great reputation once obtained, he could proclaim aloud his ideas upon ancient and modern literature; he would become the leader of a sect, he would contend for his cause with all the might of his mind. He had a thousand other, I cannot say how, brilliant dreams of youth. But his success was, like the milk-pail of Perrette, who thought she had her fortune in her hands; but the *milk was spilt, good-by to calf, cow, pig, and butter.* The piece was hissed. The innovator was so far from expecting such a result that it nearly set him crazy. He hurried from the theatre, keeping out of the way of those friends he had invited to celebrate his success: he departed the same evening, repeating La Fontaine's fable. Where did he go? To La Trappe. This was the first time that an author who had been damned had retired in this way from the world. Not only did he go without stopping, but, once arrived at this sombre retreat, he submitted completely to all its austere rules. Many dramatic authors of our day should be condemned to La Trappe.

La Trappe was in those days well peopled. Monsieur de Rancé had made the place quite the fashion. The great betook themselves to this pious retreat without turning their faces towards the storms and pleasures of the world without. The Abbé de Rancé was the chief confessor of all those souls in trouble,

who came to enjoy the pleasures of heaven in advance. It was our young solitary's turn. He had taken the habit, he had sung psalms, his flagellations had left their marks. "My child," said Monsieur de Rancé to him, "you seem very young to take the path of death and eternity." "What can I do better, father?" "Listen to the teachings of your heart. Are you sure you have done so? Does your heart never turn to the world from the solemn interests of prayer and retirement?"

The young man reflected. A monastic life was anything but attractive to a heart of only twenty years. What did he find there? The abandonment of glory. But at this thought the hissings at the Comédie-Italienne resounded again in his ears. "My reverend father, I am resolved to die in this pious retreat." "Think well of it, my son," replied the Abbé, who wished by all means to know the cause of his withdrawal from the world; "the regrets which may torment you here will be a thousand times more dangerous to your soul than any earthly passion. God has not placed us here upon earth to contemplate heaven always; we must submit to the laws of creation. Our Lord extends his blessing to labour, to the joys of the heart, to domestic enjoyment. All are not made to dig their graves here below. There is here and there a garden or a field where the ear of corn is more acceptable to God than the unfruitful herb of our retreat. Trust me, a man must have a good right

to complain of the world before he abandons it for ever. Have you a mother?" "Alas!" said the young man, "I have a mother, who loves me and weeps for my loss, if I can trust to my dreams." "Beware, such tears will not mediate for you with God: to love one's mother is to love God. I want to know what brought you here. Was it faith or sorrow? Was it some mad love ——?" "God defend me, no, father."

At this place in his confession the young solitary had turned his face more than once towards the world; that world that he had fled with so much disgust, now appeared, from the walls of La Trappe, to possess a thousand new charms; its women smiled upon him more sweetly than the saints: he saw with his mind's eye a certain orchard at Troyes, where he had plucked peaches with a certain Laura worthy of another Petrarch. "Father," replied he, with a blush, "I will confess to you, without more ado, why I came to this refuge." "Speak, my child." "I came to La Trappe because I was hissed at the Comédie-Italienne."

The handsome but melancholy face of the Abbé de Rancé was lighted up with a smile. "Vanity of vanities!" said he, with a sigh, as he thought of his own past life: "these are not the kind of misfortunes that people come to mourn over at La Trappe. Why did you not go to dry your tears upon your mother's bosom? If hereafter the Lord should afflict you with

great misfortunes, come hither to this retreat of peace and consolation; but for the present depart—go take your place in the sun."

The young man kissed the hands of the Abbé, and immediately left La Trappe, never to return. According to the Abbé de Voisenon, he had not lost his time, for he came out with an opera all written. He returned to Paris, without knowing exactly what he was to do. On the day of his arrival he heard some sacred music by Campra, and an opera of Lulli's. He went to see Campra. He spoke to him about his musical piece. He told him that a great composer ought sometimes to leave the church for the theatre, and the result, whether good or ill, was that Campra was induced to consent to make his *début* together with him. *L'Europe Galante* was prepared in a few weeks; but at the opera one is obliged to wait his turn. *L'Europe Galante* was not represented till 1697. This time the success was triumphant. La Motte entirely forgot La Trappe in the theatre. He wrote in quick succession nine operas, all of which succeeded, thanks to the music of Destouches. He had laid aside for a while his original ideas about literature: but as he was born to be an innovator, he was destined soon to return to those ideas, even without intending it. His first attempt was most unfortunate; he translated Homer, or rather disfigured Homer, with wonderful industry; he allowed himself to remodel Homer, that poem of poems. No

creation of human genius under the sun had ever been so profaned. It must be said to the honour of the French understanding, that this singular translation raised a thousand cries against it. La Motte had only the Abbé Trublet on his side. However, before it was published La Motte had obtained some illustrious opinions in its favour. Boileau himself had predicted, upon hearing the first canto, that old Homer would at last have a becoming French dress. Boileau did not know what he was saying. But I shall return by-and-by to this strange production.

While La Motte was remodelling the Iliad, he wrote several odes, operas, and essays. His first essay was a pamphlet against poetry; it made a great noise on the Parnassus of 1700. The time was well chosen; the only poet living was Fontenelle. La Motte avows that he is of the opinion of Plato and Pythagoras; Plato who banished poets from his republic; Pythagoras who condemned them to Tartarus. La Motte, like a frigid reasoner, saw in poetry nothing but rhyme. He compares our best poets seriously to jugglers who make a millet-seed pass through the eye of a needle. This was pretty nearly the opinion of Pascal; he fancied that all poetic beauty consisted in certain peculiar phrases, such as *the wonder of our days; the star of night.* La Motte condemns fiction without pity, that beauteous veil of poetry. "Fiction is a vain subterfuge. Why not say precisely to the letter what one wishes to say?

Figurative expressions are the snares that are laid to entrap the mind in order to seduce it." In tracing the origin of poetry, he says, "At first it did not differ from the essay except in an arrangement by measure of words that please the ear; fiction with its metaphors was soon introduced. This is all that is essential to poetry." And Fontenelle applauded! La Motte, when he is speaking of poetical enthusiasm, remarks, "It is a fine name given to what is the most unreasonable. Enthusiasm resembles that intoxication that makes a man beside himself, that loses him in a thousand odd images that are barren of result." La Motte, it is seen, belonged to the school of Boileau. In the midst of all these singular ideas, there is, however, occasionally found a page of good sense. Thus, in speaking of Ronsard, he ventures to criticise him as a great poet, a worthy son of Pindar, "to such a degree does all that he borrows of Horace become Pindaresque in his hands. Everywhere in his odes can be found those grand images, that dignity of expression, those metaphors, and that boldness of style that characterize the Theban poet. His is the enthusiasm that inspired Pindar."* La Motte, after having so much decried poetry, took to rhyme. His essay, which gave rise to a literary schism, was merely the preface to a collection of Pindaric and Anacreontic

* Since a parallel has been drawn between Pindar and Ronsard, we may as well mention here that their fates were similar—admired, despised, and again admired.

odes. It is true that his poetry was the best illustration of his anti-poetic preface: he thus proved his case. However, to believe his ode to Fontenelle, he hopes, thanks to his friend and himself, that the ancients will be surpassed by the moderns.

" Away with this servility
We basely show to ages past,
Homer and Virgil yet may be
By modern fame eclipsed at last.
Does Nature then to us deny
The power she gave in times gone by
The Greek and Roman name to grace?
Doats she upon her elder sons,
Only to treat the younger ones
As outcasts from the human race?"

This is speaking with more boldness than poetry; but this boldness attaches you to La Motte, as to an adventurous traveller, who trusts himself to unknown lands; his steps are followed with interest; we are disposed to protest somewhat with him against that excessive worship of the Greeks and Romans that buried the genius of France beneath the dust of the dead.

" My haughty muse will never deign
To raise her voice in borrowed strain,
An echo of the bards of old.
Those poets we must all despise,
To whom the god of song denies
A mind original and bold.
Let us the nobler course pursue,
To Pindar and to Horace true.
'T is by inventing that they led;
While the base imitating crowd
No other praise can be allowed,
Than that the others they have read."

La Motte, it is clear, wanted nothing in order to be a true poet but poetry. Perhaps his only fault is not having listened to himself; for while despising his predecessors he imitated them, he had read them too much. How often it happens that a poet buries his poetry in the leaves of a strange book!

La Motte, continuing his ode, exclaims with reason, "If there is nothing new left, if Nature has been exhausted, then it is not worth the trouble to write."

> "If all is centred in their works,
> What need we to do more than read?"

A half-century after the *cause célèbre* of the ancients and moderns, Voltaire desired in his turn to dust off the old files. He alone has delivered a judgment in due form, the judgment of the sovereign reason:—

"The great cause between the moderns and ancients is not yet decided; it was on trial from the silver to the golden age. Men have always pretended that the good old times were much better than the present. Nestor, in the Iliad, in attempting to insinuate himself as a wise conciliator in the mind of Achilles and Agamemnon, commences by telling them, 'I lived formerly among greater men than you are; I have never seen, and shall never see again, such great men as Dryas, Ceneus, Exadius, and Polyphemus, equal to the gods.....'

"Posterity has fully avenged Achilles for the poor compliment of Nestor, foolishly praised by those who

only praise antiquity. No one knows anything about Dryas; no one has hardly ever heard of Exadius or Ceneus; and as for Polyphemus, equal to the gods, he has not a very good character, unless having a great eye in the middle of his forehead, and eating men raw, are attributes of divinity.

"Antiquity is full of eulogies upon an antiquity still more remote:—

> "Men have thought in every age, the age however grand,
> That milken streams, an age before, flowed gently thro' the land."

"Horace opposes this prejudice with as much delicacy as force in his beautiful epistle to Augustus: 'Must it be then said of our poems as of our wines, that we prefer always the oldest?'

"Fontenelle expresses himself thus on the subject: 'The whole question of the superiority of the ancients or moderns reduces itself to a question like this—whether the trees formerly planted were larger than those now. If it were so, then Homer, Plato, and Demosthenes cannot be equalled in modern times; if not, then we can equal Homer, Plato, and Demosthenes.'

"With the permission of this illustrious academician, that is by no means the whole state of the question. The question is not whether nature can produce in our day as great geniuses and as great works as those of Greece and Rome, but whether we have as great. It is not impossible certainly that there may

be as tall oaks in the forest of Chantilly as there ever were in the forest of Dodona; but suppose that the oaks of Dodona had talked, that certainly would have been an advantage over ours, which probably will never talk."

The odes of La Motte are very numerous; they are of all kinds and character. That which is the most striking in each of them is the dedication, incense burned in honour of all the contemporary persons of note. It is seen that the poet, since a poet we must call him, has only written the ode for the dedication. Never did a French rhymester, with the exception of Fontenelle, and some others that we do not count, measure out his lines more according to rule. Compared with La Motte, Chapelain has the fire of genius. With La Motte it is always reason that speaks, merely reason put into rhyme. He is, however, more happy in his Anacreontic odes: he has ease in spite of himself. Take his pretty portraits in pastel for instance; with what graceful ease they are drawn!

A REVIEW OF THE CUPIDS.

"See one whose life was almost spent,
His torch extinguish'd in his hand,
With quiver empty, bow unbent,
Tottering with age could scarcely stand.

And one whose single wing could keep
Him scarce suspended in the air,
Was almost overcome by sleep,
O'erpower'd with favours of the fair.

In anger one had snapp'd his bow,
  New sorrows heavy on him lay;
A flirt had caused his tears to flow,
  Which with his torch he wiped away.

Another, whose capricious fair
  Had chill'd the ardour of his love;
New service he to seek elsewhere
  Had spread his wings away to rove."

In his rage to be original he went so far as to write an ode in prose. Lafaye answered with an ode in verse, in which he defends poetry. What does La Motte do? He puts Lafaye's ode into prose, in order to prove that rhyme and measure are of no advantage to poetry. No one was convinced.

After his odes, he wrote innumerable essays, for competition at the various academies; for some years he obtained all the prizes at Paris and in the provinces. It created a great scandal when it was resolved at a session of the Academy, that La Motte should be requested not to compete any more for the prizes. It must be stated that all his prize essays are very poor essays. It is the cool reason that speaks, like a book we have read. The Academic competition is especially fatal to innovators; they dare not venture anything but mere spectral paradoxes; they reject with fear the fire of inspiration; they await, before they write, that hour when thought has fatigued its wings, or, if they write during the happy hour of inspiration, they immediately after blot out with a

timid hand all that is fresh and brilliant in what they have written.

La Motte had gone to La Trappe, rather from a presentiment of religion than from true devotion; he became blind at the age of twenty-four; it seems that then a flash of light shone upon his inward eye; he became a fervent Christian. Since he could no longer see the ways of man, he saw more distinctly the ways of God. Here below he was in the darkness of the tomb, but was he not already within the beaming influence of that sun that never sets? Instead of the twilight, was it not the dawn that opened before him? He penetrated further into the horizon of the past and that of the future. He studied in a more contemplative retirement all the treasures of love that God has buried within the depths of the soul of man; thus he was in the habit of saying that God had struck him to the earth but to raise him to heaven. He remained blind until his death. As he had inherited from his father sufficient to live the life of a poet, he passed his life happily in the love of letters, and in the love of God. One of his nephews devoted himself to him to the extent of becoming his servant and secretary; his duty was to read to him aloud, or to write from his dictation, to dress him, to accompany him in his walks to the café, or to go with him into society.

As an additional misfortune, the gout, half the time, deprived him of the use of his feet. In spite, however, of this other obstacle, La Motte managed

to dine out almost every day. A carriage or a sedan chair was sent for him, whether he was to dine with the Marchioness de Lambert or with the Duchess du Maine. He was very much sought after in fashionable society in consequence of his wit, always sharp but always good-natured. The Duchess du Maine used to say that he always hissed with honey on his lips. At the café Procope there was always a circle ready to listen to this joyous and charming blind poet, who often astonished his listeners with his strange and novel conceptions. He spoke always with artifice; he had so much skill in dazzling his audience that they always conceded him his point, and were convinced even as regards his odes and tragedies in prose, even as to his criticisms upon the ancients. Both in society and at the café he had some distinguished listeners; for example, the Duke of Orleans, Fénélon, the Marquis of St. Aulaire, Madame de Stael; Voltaire, Fontenelle, J. B. Rousseau, Madame Dacier. But the printed words of La Motte never had the same power. He carried on the war alone; no one offered to come to his defence in his bold literary attacks. His writings had at least the glory of arousing the ardour of the libellers. There was not a single one of his essays that was not the cause of the writing of twenty pamphlets; it was the chief excitement of the times.

In 1714 he published his translation of the Iliad, preceded by a long critical essay upon that poem of Homer. What was the object of that criticism and

that translation? Without doubt to bring the ancients into disrepute. He reduced the poem to twelve cantos, that is to say, he struck out all the metaphors, all the descriptions, all the pomp of Homer. He was like a draughtsman who wished to copy a production of Titian, fancying that the colouring went for nothing in the picture. The Iliad of La Motte is the sun reflected in water, the ashes of the fire. Madame Dacier entered the lists against this author, who had been guilty of sacrilege upon the prince of poets. She wrote a book entitled *The Causes of the Corruption of Taste.* This was the scandalous attack of a weak mind. It was a fortunate thing for La Motte, for he answered with his *Reflections on Criticism,* which contrasted strikingly with the violent tirade of his adversary by its cleverness, grace, and good nature. Madame Dacier had the right on her side, but she defended it with all the coarse bitterness of the disputants of the sixteenth century. Most people would have liked to have been in the wrong, in the way La Motte was. The quarrel extended from one to another, and finally became general; panegyrics and epigrams, in prose and verse, poured down on all sides. All the Academies were engaged in the fight, some for the ancients, some for the moderns. The very shade of Perrault must have been startled. As always happens, all the world was in the right, or rather in the wrong. The Academy did not know what side to take when Monsieur de Valincourt tried

to make peace. He invited the chiefs of both parties to dinner. All deliberation was cut short, but peace was concluded. Madame de Stael says in her Memoirs, "I was present at the dinner, I represented the neutrality. The health of Homer was drunk, and everything went off well." Gacon alone remained in the arena, armed with epigrams and every variety of sonnets, under the title of *Homer avenged.* He had not been invited to the dinner. Observing La Motte's disregard of his satires, he said to him one day, "I am going to write a pamphlet with the title, *An Answer to the Silence of Monsieur de la Motte!*"

Madame Dacier had said in her book, "Alcibiades gave a good box on the ears to a rhetorician who had not read the works of Homer; what ought to be done to a rhetorician who should read the Iliad of La Motte?" "Fortunately," says La Motte, delicately in his answer, "when I read formerly a canto of my Iliad to Madame Dacier, she did not think of this historical incident." Every one was agreed that Madame Dacier had treated her adversary with rudeness, while La Motte did not forget that he was answering a French woman. "It would have been all very well," said D'Alembert, "if La Motte had kept himself to prose in this dispute; he had the misfortune to call to his aid that poetry that he had so much decried, and which, as if out of revenge, deserted him more than ever at the most critical moment. He resembled a skilful but imprudent general, who, while

successfully carrying on a war of skirmishes and delays, should wish to add to his successes a pitched battle, and should lose by a defeat all the honour of his campaign."

In his essay on Homer La Motte gives us an opinion not very well known, and somewhat clever, of Boileau upon the gods of the Iliad. "I recollect one day having asked Monsieur Despréaux (Boileau) how he accounted for the oddity and indecency of the gods in Homer; he disdained justifying it on the score of the gods being mere allegorical personages, and made me the confidant of an idea of his, which, although he knew was original with him, he did not wish to make public: it was, that Homer was afraid of wearying by the continued tragic character of his subject; that his human characters having been described only as possessing tragic passions, and as being engaged in deadly combats, he was desirous of enlivening his poem, even at the expense of the gods themselves, and that he had given them comic parts to play, as interludes to the serious nature of the action of his poem."

On the death of Thomas Corneille, La Motte presented himself, at thirty-eight years of age, with his odes and his operas, for that seat in the Academy that had been rendered illustrious by Pierre Corneille. J. B. Rousseau offered himself also. La Motte was elected because he had friends, and J. B. Rousseau was rejected because he had enemies. With the Academy influence has always been more valued than

talent. The true poet wrote an epigram by way of consolation; the bad poet delivered an inaugural address that was one of the best that had ever been heard. After having astonished his audience by his originality, he touched their feelings by a few simple and modest words, alluding to Thomas Corneille's blindness. "This reminds me of my own condition; that which age had taken away from my predecessor, I lost in my youth. This conformity in misfortune will often cause me to remind you of him; I shall thus only serve to make you feel his loss the more deeply."

Although he was blind, perhaps because he was blind, all his friends except Fontenelle wished him to get married. But he was in regard to women as to poetry, of the phlegmatic Norman school. So, by way of thanking his friends, he wrote some lines on celibacy. I can, I think, without harm to them, give his verses as if they were prose. "They wish me to take a wife! I wish to find in a wife youth and beauty combined, a mind well stored, one with life, of the pleasant, sensible kind; not a jealous but a fond heart; complacent and quite sincere; very lively, but free from art; very wise, and not austere; that she may be perfect, indeed, to all the virtues every attraction attach; this is just the kind of wife I need; too happy, however, to meet with such a match."

However, that this man, always patient and amiable, would have made a good husband, easy to live with, judge by the following trait. At the theatre, one

evening, he was struck by a giddy young fellow because he stepped upon his toe. "My dear sir," said he quietly to him, "you will sincerely regret this; I am blind." This was the first time that La Motte had, worthily, translated that blind old man Homer.

His residence was sad and sombre. It was like entering the cell of a monk. It could be easily seen that a beloved wife had never been there. Some books, disorder, dust, an old broom thrown down, some papers scattered about, a clock without hands, an hour-glass; these were what struck the visitor at first sight. The clock being without hands is thus explained: "Once, once only, the patient La Motte allowed himself to curse his fate: not knowing what to do, he broke off the innocent hands of the clock, saying that he could no longer see the time pass, but only hear it."

He had but one enemy, J. B. Rousseau. They had commenced as friends, but the Academy proved their apple of discord. It will be remembered that the first celebrated couplets of Rousseau were launched against La Motte. These two poets were chiefs of sects at the café Procope; the party of La Motte was the most numerous, for La Motte was much the best talker. Rousseau, the better poet of the two, foreseeing that La Motte would beat him at the Academy, could not resist the bitter pleasure of the epigram. He wrote some lines against his competitor to a famous opera air. These lines proved the source of his unhappiness, his misery, and his exile, for they were fol-

lowed by others unworthy of him, which he disavowed to the day of his death, but which were the weapons that wounded his honour and his glory.

La Motte in losing his sight had gained a wonderful memory. Not having his attention disturbed by what was to be seen, he acquired the art of retaining, word for word, all that he heard about literature. A young poet one day read to him, in the company of some literary friends, a tragedy; in those days they read hardly anything else but tragedies. La Motte listened in silence to the very end of the last scene. "Your tragedy is beautiful; I will answer for its success. There is one thing only that I have to regret, that is, that you have indulged in plagiarism. I would refer you, in proof of what I say, to the second scene of the fourth act." The young poet, quite overcome by such a charge, did not know how to justify himself, when La Motte added, "I do not advance what I cannot prove, and, to show you, I will recite to you this same scene which I learned by heart long since, and of which I do not forget a line." All those who were present looked at each other with astonishment; he recited the whole scene without the least hesitation. The author was completely embarrassed. After La Motte had his laugh at the young poet's embarrassment, he said to him, "Do not disturb yourself, my dear sir; the scene is yours as well as all the rest; but it appeared so beautiful to me, and so affecting, that I could not help recollecting it."

As La Motte wished to be a universal genius, he wrote some fables that Fontenelle pronounced more agreeable than those of La Fontaine. I am not altogether of the opinion of that great critic; however, I grant that those fables have been too much despised. Some of them are quite ingenious; but that which is most creditable to La Motte is that he invented all his apologues. It is quite a pity that they are so laboured in style. That which is the most remarkable and attractive about them is their moral influence; that is the point to which he hurries, without stopping for the humorous and the picturesque. One evening Voltaire was at the Temple, where, on the evening before, they had slandered La Motte. "Gentlemen," said he, with a very mysterious manner, "a forgotten fable of La Fontaine has been discovered." He read *The Pelican and the Spider*, and every one was delighted; each one tried who could best discover its apparent or hidden beauties. When they were tired of admiring, Voltaire, who before had been silent, thus spoke: "Well, gentlemen, this fable is by La Motte." At the Academy a parallel was drawn between La Motte, as a writer of fables, and La Fontaine. "The former has greater simplicity, the latter the greater ingenuity." The discussion might have continued until this day had not a philosopher thought of submitting the question to a child; this child, six years old, was set to learn in a single day a fable of La Fontaine and a fable of La Motte. He learned La Fontaine's in less than an hour, and he could not learn La Motte's at all.

Would you believe it? this man, so calm and philosophical, without smiles and without tears; this man, without fire and enthusiasm; this man that nothing affected but reason, produced a tragedy that made all Paris and the provinces weep, even the regent, who hardly believed in tragedy. *Inés de Castro* met with the same success as the *Cid*. During its representations the spectators held copies of it with pen in hand, and with their ears all alive. Never, according to D'Alembert and Duclos, was a tragedy so much praised and so much attacked. All the journalists of the time wrote either for or against it, in prose and verse; but without producing much effect upon him with all their scribbling :—

"All Paris, for *Inés*, had the eyes of Don Pedro."

This success, which astonishes us, us especially the poets of the nineteenth century, was the result of that *tragic pity* of the ancients which goes straight to the heart without exciting the nerves by that pity made up of horrors, of the moderns. In *Inés de Castro* the grief is great, but amiable, human; tears flow, but the scene never makes us turn away our eyes. How happens it that so phlegmatic and dry an intellect has succeeded in so beautiful and simple a creation? The Abbé de la Porte, in his *Dramatic Anecdotes*, relates that La Motte, wishing to succeed by all means in drawing tears, collected together all those passionate emotions that had ever been known to succeed on the

stage; that he afterward begged of his friends to seek for him in history some event in which his idea might be displayed; that the learned only found *Inés de Castro*, and that was the only reason he gave this title to his tragedy. As singular as this account appears, it accords wonderfully with the character of the poet, who was for having a tenth muse upon Parnassus, the muse of mathematics. This other story of the Abbé de la Porte is more reliable. La Motte had witnessed at the *Palais de Justice* a very dramatic incident. A son had married without the consent of his father. At the end of some years the father, having heard of the marriage, demanded of the court its dissolution. The son's advocate, when his turn came to speak, exhibited the children, the offspring of the marriage, which he had concealed near him: "There is all I have to say," exclaimed he, with an expression of true pity. Never was an advocate so eloquent. La Motte, overcome even to tears, remembered this incident in his tragedy. He introduced the children of *Inés*; it was a bold novelty. A few days before its representation, the regent, being present at a reading of the piece, had said to the poet, "Take care, La Motte, children have never before been introduced on the stage." "Then there is still something new under the sun," La Motte answered, with some pride. At the representation the pit did not know exactly how to take the appearance of the children; some were for laughing, others did not know how to hide their tears; finally a

laugh resounded in the théatre. Mademoiselle Duclos, who was playing the part of *Inés*, stopped and exclaimed indignantly, "Laugh away, fools as you are, at the finest part of the play!" and she continued her part. Tears flowed in earnest; the regent, seeing La Motte, said to him, "La Motte, you were right."

The success of this tragedy is at the present day an anomaly, for the style is the work. More than one good line can hardly be found in *Inés*, and that line is Corneille's. A tragedy without style is a monument without architecture. La Motte was only an architect of reason. Of all the criticisms this saying of a distinguished woman must not be forgotten: "Monsieur de la Motte has, like Monsieur Jourdan in the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, written prose without knowing it." The saying of Voltaire will be recollected, which is to the same purpose. La Motte was declaiming one day in the presence of Voltaire against tragedies in verse; it was a short time after the appearance of this poet's *Œdipus*: "Your tragedy is beautiful," said La Motte; "I must put it into prose."—"Do so," replied Voltaire, "and I will put your *Inés* into verse."

Inés is a masterpiece of dramatic construction; love has never been more miserable, the pride of rank has never been more successfully vanquished by nature; the whole interest is derived from these two sentiments, eternal sources of tragic pity. The effect is never in

what is said, but in the situation; thus, in reading, *Inés* loses all its charm, and all its power. La Motte, who was only a man of talent, could never clear the barrier of genius. Intellect and reason stop, pale and chilled, before this barrier; in order to clear it, one must have the fire and spirit of a young horse, that can take the bit in his teeth at the proper moment.*

La Motte died in the midst of his fame, not foreseeing that glory would so soon abandon his shade. He died from an attack of gout, in his sixtieth year. His last hour was like his whole life, devoutly Christian. Toward the end of his days he had versified some psalms, always to the disadvantage of poetry.

In the *French Parnassus* La Motte is engraved in profile, with Destouches, his musical composer. His physiognomy is anything but agreeable. He has upon his head, as in all his portraits, a turban, or rather a rag. He was the only poet of his day who disdained the wig. His dress is of a novel kind; it is a kind of Greek drapery, without meaning. The medallion consecrated to his glory represents a Cupid with a trumpet and a lute, hovering above a tomb, where the

* Besides criticisms, there were four travesties played with success. The tragedy had touched the feelings to such an extent that more than once the spectators were seen to weep on seeing those travesties, being reminded of the real piece. La Motte laughed at the critics, saying, "What matters their tirades? they wept." A man, paid to hiss at La Motte, was so overcome at one of the representations of *Inés*, that he turned toward a companion, wiping his eyes, and said, "My friend, hiss for me, I haven't the strength."

angry serpents of envy are hissing; and surmounting the work there is the following line:—

"Death assures my triumph."

It can be truly said that this is a line without rhyme or reason. I do not know of any rhyme in *umph*; and death, so far from establishing the empire of La Motte, destroyed, with the same stroke, the man and his work.

La Motte has only left behind him the memory of his fine talents. He was almost a universal genius, for he had no especial vocation for anything in particular. Talent is a great thing: it saves one from false steps, it gives an agreeable tone to feebleness, it dazzles the eyes at a time when there is nothing to address to the heart and the thoughts; but talent passes away, like a fashion. During a man's life, he can regulate his talent according to the varied tastes of his age; but as soon as he is dead his work remains buried like so many rags in confusion in the corner of an old trunk. In turning over the works of this transient writer, we seem to find the costumes of a past fashion, the cut of which does not suit any one. Great geniuses are dressed with so much art and so much richness, that they are always in fashion.

La Motte had boldness and rashness: he despised prejudice; he knew how to go out of the beaten paths; in fine, there is but one thing wanting to give him a place in the sun of glory—genius. What is remarkable, La Motte had less originality in trying

to be original by system than most of the writers of his day, who made no such attempt. It is much better to follow one's fancy than to try and master it. In poetry especially, chance is often more fortunate than reason.

With a good search, and without alluding to Jean-Jacques, we might succeed in finding some other innovators of the eighteenth century: Piron, who, before La Chaussée, attempted to make people both laugh and cry at the same time in the theatre; the Abbé Prévost, who was the originator of the French romance; Diderot, who might have invented Sterne; Voltaire, who had invented the prose fable, as La Fontaine had invented the poetical; André Chénier, who clothed poetry in the flowing peplum of the Greeks; Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, who was a landscape painter in love with nature. But I love to think that these poets and romance writers have enlarged the domain of art without design. Once again, chance is a great master. Would it not be better, however, to say inspiration?

BUFFON.

THE philosophy of the eighteenth century was the offspring of the Renaissance. What the latter had done for art, the former did for the science of mind. The same movement that had led on Michael Angelo, at a later day brought thinkers themselves to the study of Nature. The sixteenth century, great as it was, looked only at the beauties of Nature through the veil of pagan antiquity. Besides, the prevailing religious opinions of the age deterred men from the investigation of the mysteries of the material world. The church, which has always condemned the stage, had put its interdict upon the grand theatre of the Creator himself. It was necessary that there should be a complete revolution in opinion before mankind would venture upon the contemplation of the magnificence of Nature. Philosophy brought about this change; the observation of facts and the triumph of reason followed. The barrier which kept back the human mind upon the threshold of the temple of Nature was thrown down. Two men appeared at the same time; two men, one of whom alone would have sufficed to give renown to the memorable era which gave them birth—Buffon and Linnæus.

These two great naturalists had nothing in common but genius. Providence, that had given them birth in the same year, within four months of each other, was pleased to separate them otherwise by a great number of contrasts. Linnæus first saw the light in an humble Swedish cottage, Buffon in a French château. Forced to enter a shoemaker's shop for a living, Linnæus learned to think in hammering leather. Buffon, surrounded by all the enticements of luxury, had little reason to bring the force of his will to bear but in resisting fortune. The bent of their faculties was hardly more alike. The two showed, in their scientific character, traces of the influence of their early life. Linnæus was pre-eminently the workman, and Buffon the artist of Nature.

George Louis Leclerc de Buffon was born the 7th of September, 1707, at Montbar, in Burgundy, the land that had shown its fertility in giving birth to St. Bernard and Bossuet. Buffon's father was the parliamentary counsellor of his district. He gave his children a solid education, and left to them the choice of a profession. On leaving college the youthful Buffon made the acquaintance by chance—what is chance after all?—of an Englishman of his own age, the youthful Duke of Kingston. Like two birds that had escaped from their cage, they gaily commenced their wanderings. Behold the two with the wide world before them, travelling whither they pleased, at a period of life when the heart feels and

the eyes are wide open to the beauties of earth and sky. When France was travelled over, then Italy was before them. They had an eye for Nature everywhere. Buffon, at a later day, made use of the pictures that these travels had painted on his memory: one of his peculiar qualities as a naturalist was his power of natural description.

The love of renown and of public distinction was the ruling principle in the character of Buffon. He was grave even in his gallantries. His *billets-doux* had the air of letters addressed to posterity. "Buffon," remarked Madame Necker, "could not write upon trifling subjects. When he attempted to clothe small objects with his magnificent robe, it fell in great folds all about."

Who would believe that so original a mind made its first essay in translations? After a residence of some months in England, he published, on his return to France, Haller's work on Plants, and Newton's Fluxions.' These translations, and his original prefaces, first gave him a knowledge of his power as a writer. Henceforward Buffon continued these researches. He wrote in succession several memoirs on geometry, physics, and rural economy. He was then twenty-six years of age: twenty-six is the infancy of genius, yet old men, who had grown grey with study, regarded him as their brother.

The construction of a mirror, after that of Archimedes of old, of all the labours of Buffon at this early

period, disclosed most clearly the secret of his inquiring mind. The sun was the point of view of our young observer. What did this bold son of earth wish to attempt face to face with this giant of the universe? Buffon undertakes to demonstrate the primitive source of the omnipotent force which centres in the sun, and in order to arrive at this result he proposes to burn substances at great distances by concentrating upon them the consuming fires of this great planet. The ancients believed that the young eagle practised its eye in gazing on the sun from the borders of its nest. The genius of Buffon had not yet spread its wings to their full extent, when he had already looked with the eye of science upon the great source of light.

As yet the great naturalist had only, so to speak, tacked about in the vast ocean of science, his sail sought the direction of the wind in order to point his course. An accidental circumstance fixed the resolution of this thoughtful voyager. Dufay, a man of education, a young officer high at court, was then the chief manager of the Garden of Plants. He was on the eve of death before his prime. In whose hands was the management of this establishment, so long neglected, and only just now beginning to emerge from its sad state of confusion, to pass? Hellot, the chemist, hurried to the bed-side of the sick man, and said to him, "Buffon is the only man who has the force of mind to continue your work of reform.

Restrain all feeling of rivalry, and recommend this friend of mine for your successor. This request is stated in the letter I now present. Sign." Hellot was insinuating and firm; Dufaï signed it with his dying hand. Maurepas, the minister, accepted the proposition that was presented to him in this insidious manner. It was an act of favour, for Buffon had never made natural history a study. This, however, is not the first time that favour though blind made a happy hit. Bonaparte was also made a general through intrigue, and at the outset of his career was thought by his comrades an officer of fortune.

Everything was to be done. Buffon trusted to his star, and soon, so to speak, a new history emerged from the darkness that covered all Nature. Until the eighteenth century the field of science was dry and barren. Pliny had written a romance of Nature. The philosophers, or rather the learned men of the middle ages, had followed in the tracks of antiquity with a sérvile step. While doing justice to his predecessors, Buffon opened a new road which was that of observation and experiment. Convinced that the works of the human mind could only resist time by means of a good style, he applied the art of writing to the natural sciences. The chief characteristic of Buffon's style is its grandeur. Buffon's style wants, perhaps, flexibility and variety; it would be more pleasing to meet with occasional marks of simplicity, but he is grand on grand subjects; and when he

rises, it is clear that it is upon wings. The word colourist was unknown in the language of Racine and Bossuet; it was created expressly for the painter of Nature.

Buffon married Mademoiselle de Saint-Bélin in 1762: "She was a charming woman," says Herault de Séchelles, "whom he selected at the age of fifty-five years, from inclination."

Buffon was an exception to the men of his day. His life was laborious and nobly tranquil. He was on good terms with the leaders of the philosophical movement. This dignified reserve was only once transgressed, and then Buffon was not to blame. Voltaire charged Buffon's style with being too pompous and stilted. The following line, which he discharged like an arrow at the author of *The Theory of the Earth*, is well known:—

"You talk of physics in bombastic style."

One day, when the '*Natural History*' was quoted in the presence of Voltaire, "Not so natural," he replied. Voltaire, with his hatred of the deluge, allowed himself to contradict the opinion of Buffon in regard to the shells found upon the surface of the earth, which, according to the naturalist, had been deposited there by the sea. In Voltaire's opinion, the pilgrims in the time of the Crusades had brought these shells to France from Syria. It took a naturalist like Buffon to mistake this joke for serious.

At first he got angry, and then afterward acknowledged that he was wrong in so doing. This little quarrel was soon settled; each of the two opponents settled it in his peculiar way: Voltaire by a stroke,—"I do not wish to remain at sword's point with M. de Buffon for a cockle-shell;" and Buffon by an elegant phrase,—"It may be thought, as I think myself, that I have not treated M. de Voltaire with sufficient seriousness. I acknowledge that it would have been better not to have uttered this opinion at all, than to have uttered it with a joke. I declare so much for M. de Voltaire, myself, and *posterity*." This interchange of courtesies did not stop here. Buffon presented Voltaire with a copy of his works; Voltaire wrote him a letter of thanks, in which he spoke of Archimedes the first, as the predecessor of Buffon. Buffon in reply remarked that a second Voltaire would never be spoken of. Buffon put on his best ruffles when he wrote to women. Here is a letter of his to Madame de Genlis:—

"I am no longer a lover of Nature. I forsake Nature for you, my dear madame, who do more and deserve more. Nature only knows how to create bodies, you create souls. Would that mine had been of this happy creation! I would then have what I now want to make myself agreeable, and you would enjoy my infidelity with pleasure. Pardon me, madame, for this moment of delirium and of love. I will now write rationally."

Buffon's conversation was by no means so stilted as his written style. His society was much sought after in the world, where his acquaintances, of a class by themselves, enthroned him as king. "The conversation of Buffon," says Madame Necker, "has a peculiar interest. He has busied himself his whole life with ideas unknown to most men, and, therefore, his talk has always the piquancy of novelty." His beautiful and dignified face gave increased dignity to what he said. Buffon was not always equally happy when he left the domain of science for that of literature. La Motte, Fontenelle, Marivaux, had made it the fashion to declaim against poetry. No one went further in this rage than the author of the 'Epochs of Nature.' Speaking of some beautiful verses, he remarked that "they were as beautiful as beautiful prose."—"I heard, in 1780," says Laharpe, "the respectable and venerable Buffon sustain, very positively, that the most beautiful verses were full of faults, and did not approach the perfection of good prose." Would the fable of the fox that lost his tail be applicable even to great minds? D'Alembert was still more of a geometer than Buffon was a prose-writer. One day he said to Rivarol, "Don't talk to me about your Buffon, that Marquis of Tuffière, who, instead of simply writing the word horse, says, 'The most noble conquest that man has ever made is that of this beautiful and spirited animal.'" "Yes," replied Rivarol, joking, "it is like

that fool Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, who has taken it into his head to write—

> " 'From sacred precincts whence Aurora springs,
> To where the sun in setting gilds the earth,'

instead of saying 'from east to west.' "

Since Buffon, Rivarol, and D'Alembert, time has done justice to the periphrasis, but the poetry remains.

Buffon seldom quitted the Garden of Plants, where he reigned an absolute sovereign, except to go occasionally during the summer to his beautiful residence at Montbar. He was my lord in everything, in his style of writing, in society, and private life. It is well known that he never worked but in full dress and ruffles. Might it not be said that he wished to elevate himself above the plants, whose laws he was investigating? Dressed as we have described him, he was in the habit of retiring to a pavilion in a remote corner of his garden, where he was not visible to any one. When not at work, he retained his taste for display. He always carried his head high when he walked. On Sunday he was to be seen going to church in company with a Capuchin friar, who performed the double duty of confessor and steward. Pompously enthroned upon his manorial seat, he received with manifest pleasure the honours due to his rank. During the week his usual walks were in the fields, where the rural population of his neighbourhood

were at work. As he walked, he was in the habit of addressing in terms of gallantry the women and young girls that he met with the sickle in their hands, or the sheaves under their arms.

He had a large fortune that he spent nobly. The expenses of the Garden of Plants exhausted all his means, and he was forced to borrow. The old building was too small to contain all the wealth of the three kingdoms of Nature that the great name of Buffon had attracted from all parts of the world to the Garden of Plants. At each addition to his *Cabinet of Natural History*, Buffon gave up an apartment in his house. At one time it was his library, at another his parlour, and again his bed-room, so that at last he found himself put out of doors by himself. Buffon found it necessary to get possession of a hotel in his neighbourhood. It was necessary that Alexander should conquer Asia in order that Aristotle might collect together the works of nature. Buffon had alone need of his glory, for the composition of a much greater herbal.

Buffon personally was the soul of the Garden of Plants. Daubenton used to remark, "Without Buffon, I would not have passed fifty years of happiness in that garden." These two philosophers were true lovers of Nature. Buffon, however, looked at Nature with the eye of a philosopher, a writer, and a poet; and Daubenton as a classifier. Buffon was short-sighted. It was especially with his mind's eye that he saw. The eyes appeared to him as instru-

ments too purely gross and mechanical wherewith to investigate truth. Physical analysis he never had any confidence in. A philosopher once spoke to him of an experiment he was about trying with a diamond: "I will burn it in a golden crucible," he said.—"The best crucible is the mind," replied Buffon. It was in submitting Nature to this crucible that he was enabled to deduce the general laws of existence.

Like Descartes, the robust thinker, who, while by the doctrine of free inquiry he shook to its foundations the entire edifice of catholicism, was devoutly worshipping the Virgin Mary, Buffon was always a model of submission to the requirements of his religion. When in the country, even during week-days, he assiduously performed his religious duties. Of all things he most feared the censures of his church. Having heard that his opinions upon the formation of the earth had given concern to the grave doctors of the Sorbonne, he quickly disavowed any consequence that infidelity might draw from any of his works; he even attempted to reconcile his hypothesis with the account of creation in the book of Genesis. This Christian-like proceeding entirely disarmed the Sorbonne: it withdrew its hand that was already armed with thunderbolts, ready to dash them upon the doomed head of the philosopher. On this account there have been doubts raised as to the sincerity of Buffon. Perhaps the author of the *Theory of the Earth* recollected the fate of Galileo.

Buffon was nearly fifty when he was elected member of the French Academy. Grimm thus describes his inaugural address: "Buffon did not confine himself to reminding us that the Chancellor Seguier was a great man, that Cardinal Richelieu was a very great man, that Louis XIV. and Louis XV. were also very great men; that the Archbishop of Sens was also a great man, and that, finally, the whole forty were great men; this distinguished man, disdaining the ordinary nauseous and tiresome eulogies, deemed it more appropriate to treat of a subject worthy of his pen and the Academy; his subject was 'Style,' and it was said that the Academy had taken a teacher of belles-lettres." He followed nature as his model: "Why," asks Buffon, "are the works of Nature always so perfect? Because each work is always a whole, and her design is constant and eternal; she prepares in silence the germs of all her productions; she sketches out by a single touch the primitive form of each existence; she develops it, she perfects it by a constant action and in a fixed time. The result astonishes; but it is the impress of divinity which should strike our minds."

The author of the *Natural History* was king at Montbar, but he was a king without subjects. This country, in fact, is the very image of solitude. The court of Archimedes II. consisted but of a few travellers; among these may be mentioned Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Herault de Séchelles. Jean-Jacques

fell upon his knees and kissed the threshold of the door. Rousseau was just the man to admire Buffon; great writers are members of the same family. Herault de Séchelles, then a young magistrate belonging to the parliament of Paris, paid a visit to Buffon in his retreat at Montbar, in that sanctuary of science, that cradle of natural history, as Prince Henry remarked. With a coarse freedom he tore aside the veil of hospitality, and exposed to the eyes of an inquisitive public the mysteries of the fireside, the innermost thoughts of the man and the philosopher. It was to him that Buffon addressed the following compromising remark: "I have always written God, but all that is to be done is to substitute for this word the power of nature." God alone knows Buffon's opinion of his nature; but we cannot see how one word substituted for another can possibly change the belief of mankind.

Buffon was particularly fond of Montbar, for there he could labour in entire freedom; listen to Vicq-d'Azyr: "There arises at Montbar, in the middle of an ornamental garden, an ancient tower; it was there that Buffon wrote his history of nature; it was thence that his fame spread over the whole world. He went there at the rising of the sun. The morning tints, the early song of birds, the varied aspect of the landscape, everything which impressed the senses, reminded him of his model. Wandering in the walks, he hurried, he lingered, he stopped, sometimes with

his head raised to heaven as if inspired, at others bent in contemplation, as if about to create. He wrote, he erased, he declaimed." Vicq-d'Azyr does not tell us that the first person that Buffon met was his valet, carrying a pair of curling-tongs and a box of hair-powder.

II.

Buffon's style has been complained of as too pompous and grandiloquent; his thoughts, like his person, required to be set off with ornaments. This uniform elevation of style is sometimes monotonous; a little negligence and simplicity occasionally would be more to our taste. This fault is particularly noticeable in Buffon's addresses to the Academy, when he did not wish to transgress the usual rule of saying a great deal about nothing at all. Style ought to take an example from those women who, satisfied with what beauty has done for them, despise artificial ornaments. Buffon wrote to the Abbé Bexon, "Paint well your beautiful swan." In nature swans are never painted; notwithstanding, they are not the less white and agreeable for all that.

There is nothing that so heightens a natural grace as that air of nonchalance that belongs to it. Coquetry is never more enticing than at twilight. The muse of style is like Virgil's shepherdesses; she tosses

at us the apple, and escapes behind the willows, content with having given us just a glimpse :—

> "To the willows she like Galatea glides,
> Her flowing hair her lovely shoulders hides."

Among great writers Buffon is one that we admire but do not love. "The style is the man," is one of Buffon's own remarks, and I regret it; for what the great naturalist especially wants is feeling. When in describing the building of a bird's nest he calls it a labour of love, I do not hear the fluttering of the wings or of the heart of the mother. When enumerating dogs of all kinds, of all occupations, so to speak, his shepherd's dog interests me, but the blind man's dog is forgotten. Chateaubriand remarks that if Buffon had been a Christian he would have shown more feeling. I do not know that; he was wanting in simplicity of heart, and simplicity of heart is natural religion. At a reading of *Paul and Virginia*, at Madame Necker's, Buffon put the author out of countenance by his yawning. As Bernardin de St. Pierre continued to read, the naturalist ordered his carriage in a loud voice, to avoid listening to *such nonsense.* Buffon could not appreciate the freshness of the loves of those dawning stars. On that occasion a clever woman remarked of St. Pierre's work, that, "If a folly, it is a folly that will be at any rate immortal."

Buffon, like Montesquieu, was an author, *en grand seigneur*, who passed through life and its passions without having his heart touched. He founded the dig-

nified in style: Lebrun, the artist, was not more majestic. This ambitious dignity can be pardoned Buffon on the score of the thoughts it clothes. Montesquieu, in writing his *Spirit of the Laws*, looked for clearness, reason, vigour. Buffon, in his *Natural History*, rose to the height of poetry; in fact, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau as he looked upon the wonders of nature, he felt himself to be a poet. What a glorious time for French poetry when Voltaire, Montesquieu, Jean-Jacques, Buffon, and Diderot reigned supreme! All the genius of our language is found in the style of these five writers. It is the gamut of the passions, of sentiment, and of thought.

Buffon was not an artist after the manner of painters and sculptors, but he understood beauty,—if not that of art, at least that of nature. He has somewhere said, "The ancients have made such beautiful statues that, by common agreement, they are the most exact representation of the human body in its perfection. These statues are not mere copies of the human body, for they were not modelled from any single person, but from all mankind." Is not this a striking homage to art on the part of the eloquent author of the *Natural History?* God has diffused beauty, and art has combined it. This was after all an eloquent translation of Plato's dream.

Though retired from the world, he enjoyed his share in the gossip and scandal of his day. "You have heard, no doubt," he writes to the Abbé Bexon, "that

Voltaire has those plays of his which have been rejected by the theatres acted at his own house. This only proves that the managers were right." The judgment of Buffon was not charitable to an excess. "M. Marivaux," he wrote to Bexon, "has published a little work, which makes the second volume of his life of Marianne. Little minds and the fops of literature will admire his thoughts and style." Buffon was difficult to please. He was asked one day how many great men there were. "Five," he replied; "Newton, Bacon, Leibnitz, Montesquieu, and I."

The lofty opinion that Buffon had of himself was justified by the esteem of his cotemporaries. "Voltaire, it is true," says Laharpe, "made more of a noise in the world than he did; he was more dreaded, and more sought after as the voice of the opinion of the day; but Buffon was more respected, because free from this dread; his reputation was undisturbed by any personal considerations. At Paris he kept up relations with the highest society; he even corresponded with crowned heads. The greatness of his fame impressed Frederick the Great and the Empress Catherine, who were untiring in their efforts to induce him to establish himself in their kingdoms. Buffon sent to the empress a part of himself—his bust, by Houdon. "Seventy-four years graven on this marble will only serve to render it colder," he wrote to her majesty. He was a fine-looking old man; his features, his person, his walk, his great age, the only signs of

which were his grey hairs, everything about him was noble and commanding. His genius shone from his face.*

Of all the honours that were bestowed upon Buffon in his old age none flattered his just pride so much as the erection of his statue in that garden of plants, which he had adorned by his generosity and his genius. Moreover, this statue was a concession from that envy which always attacks great men. This homage was intended to appease the anger of the prince of naturalists, in consequence of some talk about a successor. The statue arose; but a low jealousy concealed itself in the choice of the epigraph, as an asp lies hid among flowers. Some one wrote upon the statue, no doubt with a malicious design, *naturam complectitur omnem*. On the following day a mischievous young wag, no doubt the mere agent of some odious rivals, wrote beneath these words the following malicious comment: *He who embraces much, grasps little.* Buffon stormed; the equivocal epigraph was erased, and the following was substituted: *majestati naturæ par ingenium.*

The delight that Buffon felt in consequence of this public homage amounted almost to intoxication. About the same time his son erected another monument at Montbar, of more humble pretensions. Near the

* Louis XV. shared with the other kings in their esteem for Buffon. He conferred upon him the title of count.

tower, which was of great height, a column was raised, with the following inscription :—

"*Excelsæ turri, humilis columna,*
Parenti suo, filius Buffon, 1785."

Though Buffon was not fond of poetry, he was a considerable admirer of that addressed to himself. "Everybody who has heard me read the beautiful ode of M. Lebrun," he wrote to the Abbé Bexon, "concurs in admiring it." This ode was a tribute to the naturalist.

Buffon availed himself of assistance in his labours. Daubenton, Guenneau de Montbelliard, and the Abbé Bexon, aided him. From this we learn that the idea of literary aid is not peculiar to our day. He himself, however, worked hard. "I was in the habit of spending," he said to Herault de Séchelles, "twelve or fourteen hours in study; in this consisted all my pleasure. In truth, I devoted myself more to this than to thoughts of glory. Glory may come after, if it will, and it does always come." It had already come for the author of the *Epochs of Nature*

Buffon died at Paris, the 7th of April, 1788, at the age of eighty-one. Nature was widowed. "One thing is certain," says Laharpe, "that he received the last sacraments of the church, which, by a scandal that had become a sort of fashion, most French philosophers thought it a duty to refuse." Buffon observed the proprieties to the last.

Buffon died in the year preceding the revolution. His son was startled at the sight of the deluge of blood which began to flow upon the tomb of his father. This celebrated naturalist, who had written the history of the ancient deluge, did not foresee such a deluge as that.

Buffon's son had been something of a traveller. The empress of Russia had received him with distinction in her kingdom. All the crowned heads expressed to him the desire of attaching him to their service. The revolution accused him of no other crime than being the son of his father. It was the aristocratic title of the Count de Buffon that drew upon him the vengeance of '93. Dragged to execution, this young man, pale and trembling, could hardly understand the mystery of this bloody farce. Subdued and bent, like a reed, he inclined and raised his head alternately before the torrent of the mob that rushed against him. When he had mounted the fatal plank, when the executioner bound his hands in earnest, he trembled, he tottered, and turned toward the crowd:—

"Fellow-citizens, I am the son of Buffon!"

The people were silent. "What is that to me?" said the executioner; "it would be all the same if you were the pope's son."—"I am the son of Buffon, the author of the *Natural History*," proudly reiterated the victim.—"I do not know how to read," muttered the executioner.—"Of what crime am I guilty?" asked the poor young man, with a conscience void of offence.

—"If it was not you, it was your father, then! You have, besides, the head of an aristocrat."

These fellows of the guillotine know men only by their heads.

There was nothing more to be said. Buffon's son wrapped himself in the glory of his father, and in this sacred robe received the fatal blow.

The son, the tomb, the statue, and the inheritance of Buffon—the revolution swallowed up all. At the moment that the heir of an immortal name fell under the brutal stroke of the guillotine, the people were showering public honours upon a foreign naturalist. The bust of Linnæus, the cobbler's apprentice, was placed in the Garden of Plants, under the shade of the cedar of Libanus. Women, children, old men, paid their worship to him in this new temple of nature. Beneath this appearance of homage to the Swedish philosopher lurked a hatred of the French naturalist; the glory of the child of the people was exalted in order to humble the memory of the man of noble birth. The clouds that gathered over the memory of Buffon cleared away with the passing of the tempest of the French revolution.

The author of the *Natural History* had always but little regard for classifications. It was always his opinion that they required a great deal of labour that was barren of result, at the expense of higher qualities. It has been supposed that the rivalry between him and Linnæus was owing to his uncompromising opposition

to what now is termed *system* in natural history. We think it was rather owing to the peculiar bent of his mind. Buffon dealt with masses. His bold vision embraced in its glance great general truths; his mind required great space to think in. He did not believe in measuring nature with a yard-stick. To take account of the stock of the riches of the globe, to ticket them and arrange them in order, was quite a secondary affair; that he left to the classifiers. The learned men who drew up these inventories were, in his opinion, mere clerks of science. Cuvier without doubt did much toward perfecting the systems which existed before his day, but it must be allowed in honour of Buffon that naturalists acknowledge the incompleteness of these labours. All classification is more or less artificial; that is to say, the order in which organic beings are classified expresses but imperfectly the natural relations of the different members of the animal kingdom. The system, which is spoken so much of now-a-days, is a sort of philosopher's stone, which is always in a state of solution in the crucible of the alchemists of nature, and so remains.

Buffon was not a man of detail. Not only did he engage others to write for his *History of Birds*, but he complained in his letters of the obligation he was under to "write about feathers." Besides he complains of those melancholy marsh-birds, *about which one does not know what to say*. What Buffon's mind wanted above all things was an extensive horizon.

He was never so much at ease as upon the subject of the general laws of Nature. There his genius showed the power of divination. It has been said by a late writer, that Buffon's true merit consisted in having founded the historical and descriptive part of his science: praise or blame, it is not quite correct. Buffon is, without doubt, an admirable historian of animals, especially as regards style; but this merit, rare as it is, is only secondary with him; his chief, his true merit, consists in having been the philosopher of natural history. Whether it is the discovery of the great law of the geographical distribution of organic beings, whether it is the settlement of the question of the variety of species, or whether it is the tracing out the origin of the earth, he always rises to the greatest heights that human speculation is permitted to reach. His history is the only one which deserves, after that of Bossuet, and more deservedly than his, the just title of the *Universal History*. The past, the present, the future even of our planet, all come within his embrace; aided by the light of genius, he boldly explores those depths of time where any other torch than that of revelation had hitherto failed to burn.

A modern author has said, "Buffon conjectures, Cuvier demonstrates." This is not just. If Cuvier has followed in the steps of any one, it must be Linnæus rather than Buffon. The school of Cuvier is more precise, less bold, has fewer general views

than that of his predecessor: the one is rather a sculptor, the other an architect. Buffon carves and builds on a large scale, regarding less the order and the perfection of details than the majesty of the whole, he aims unceasingly to produce the effects of perspective. The true disciple of Buffon is not to be found in France. This disciple is a son of Germany, it is Goethe, who added to his genius as a poet the almost equal genius of a naturalist. "I was born," he has written of himself, "in 1749, in that memorable year of the publication of the three volumes of Buffon's work. I attach some importance to this coincidence."

The greatest of Buffon's works is the *Epochs of Nature*. This one, as usual, was the least thought of when first published. According to Laharpe, the author had written the romance of physics; but Laharpe is no authority in such matters. The nineteenth century has recurred to the work of Buffon and examined it, so to speak, from the heights of the elevation of science. This loftier point of view has been more favourable for Buffon. The admirable investigations of Cuvier, in throwing light upon the extinct beings of the world, have fixed with more precision the eras of the earth's formation, but they have not cast into oblivion the bold discoveries of the prince of naturalists. What an intuitive power of foresight must he have had in anticipating, in the absence even of facts, what the labours of half a century have not yet revealed to geologists!

Buffon was the first to carry his vision back to the primitive ages: from the chaos, hitherto an inexplicable mystery, from the darkness that covered the history of the earth, there shines a new light. From the present condition of the earth he deduced its former state. His eye scrutinized the records inscribed upon the surface of the earth, and buried in its depths; and from the vast stage of past events the mind of Buffon constructed a thoughtful drama. It cannot be said of him,—

> "Though God your priest has often preach'd,
> God's councils yet you have not reach'd."

Buffon appears, on the contrary, to have been present at the councils of the Creator, so completely does he develop, in his admirable style, the history of the origin of the world. After the general ideas of the author of the *Epochs*, there was nothing left but to use our eyes; the great plan of creation was marked out. Standing upon the buried monuments of our globe, Buffon opens to the view at each instant, as it were, by flashes of lightning, boundless horizons, that the science of our age has not yet reached. Without doubt, the work of Buffon contains a crowd of errors of fact, but these are details that time corrects, without injuring the unity of the structure. The naturalist recorded this great literary testament, at a period of life quite advanced; notwithstanding, as in the work of God which is the object of its contemplation, there can be found in it no traces of old age.

We have already spoken of the scruples, or, as it may be preferred, the fears of Buffon in regard to the Sorbonne, that his bold speculations on the formation of the globe had aroused. "I hope," he wrote to the worthy Abbé Leblanc, "that there never will be any question about putting my book under the ban of the church, and, indeed, I have done all I could not to deserve it, and to avoid those theological broils that I am more afraid of than all the criticism of the geometricians and natural philosophers." The Sorbonne, in fact, drew back, beneath their sleek coat of fur, the claw that ought never to have been thrust out.

Without always rising to that height, which is almost that of poetry, Buffon, in his description of the habits of animals, shows a genius as a writer that never had a model, and never will have an imitator. His manner is somewhat that of a writer of fables; he endows the lion with magnanimity; the cat he describes as faithless, inconstant, obstinate, thievish, cunning, and a flatterer, like all rogues.

"Animals," says Madame Necker, "appeared to be too remote from us; the art of Buffon consists in bringing them nearer and nearer to us." The historian of Nature, not contented with embellishing the French language, ennobles every subject he touches, by his peculiar manner.

Buffon is sometimes more grandiloquent than eloquent, for, being too eager in the pursuit of eloquence, he goes beyond it. We would not say with Vicq-

d'Azyr, in his eulogium on Buffon, "Envy has pretended to find bombast in his style where there is nothing but beauty." There is beauty, but there is also bombast. Buffon was forced to go with his age.

Buffon had a dread of satire. When Rivarol entered society, he looked out for a new road to fortune; he knew that the man who had the will could always find a sunny place in this world. It was his opinion that that sly fox La Fontaine was not the only poet who had lived at the expense of those who listened to him; to speculate on flattery was a vulgar business, quite unworthy Rivarol; he preferred to speculate on satire.

"The world," he used to say, "is a vast arena, where the good and the bad, lambs and wolves, were mingled together; I will be vicious, I shall be feared, I shall make my fortune; at each scratch of my claws they will applaud me; at each growl and bite they will throw me a bone." This system succeeded to perfection. His first words of satire spread rapidly. Buffon received Rivarol with a thousand manifestations of favour. He offered him an apartment in his mansion, a country-house in the country. Rivarol made no objection. Who was the guiltier of the two?

This mode of entertaining Nemesis did not do Buffon much honour. It would have been more touching to have seen him ascend to the garret of some poor poet, showing himself the beneficent nobleman amid misery, rather than the hospitable lord to

the critic. Rivarol, enthusiastic as he had become in favour of Buffon, did not flatter all the works of this great man. Of his son he said, "That he was the worst chapter in his father's natural history: between the son and the father a whole world intervened."

Critics did not await the death of Buffon before disputing his claims to genius. Read this clever page of Grimm's, *apropos* to the reception of Saint Lambert at the Academy: "On his entrance to the Academy, a censer was put into his hands, with the understanding that he was to swing it not only behind him, toward the founders, but under the noses of the celebrated members of the Academy then living. The new Academicians worked the censer to perfection, and there is not a boy in the parish who could have done it better before the bearer of the holy sacrament. Apart from the illustrious President de Montesquieu, and the patriarch of Ferney, the Abbé Condillac and D'Alembert came in for their share of praise. I cannot tell by what fatality Saint Lambert forgot M. Buffon, who was also one of the forty. I am tempted to act like the Gascon officer who, on returning from the palace where he had mounted guard, during a session of parliament under Louis XIV., stopped on the Pont-Neuf, before the statue of Henry IV., and said to his company, '*My friends, let us salute this one: he is as worthy as any of them.*' If Buffon is reproached for false hypotheses, no one, at

any rate, can deny the elevation of his thoughts, the dignity and the beauty of his style."

There are a number of the sayings of this great writer that are often quoted: they are neither the best nor the truest. "Genius," he said, "is only great patience." This is false: patience neither gives insight into things, nor the knowledge of their relations; all this is a gift of nature. Genius is inspiration. Was it not to do honour to the visit of this daughter of heaven that Buffon dressed himself so finely before entering his study? Of what use were the embroidered ruffles, waistcoats and coats turned up with gold, if it were not to do honour to this invisible mistress of his mind? I prefer this other remark of his, not so famous: "Happiness comes from sweetness of temper." Buffon was thinking of Mademoiselle de Saint-Belin, whose happy life was the result of grace and virtue.

Buffon occupies, in the eighteenth century, a place by himself; pre-eminent as a philosopher during the reign of philosophy, he has grandly displayed the harmony between God and his universe. Less intellectual than Voltaire, less bold than Jean-Jacques Rousseau, he equalled Montesquieu in thought and the art of writing. According to Grimm, Montesquieu had "the style of a genius," and Buffon "the genius of style." This distinction is too antithetical. We prefer to find resemblances between those great men, or rather more simple contrasts: the one has grasped to perfection the spirit of the laws of society, the other

the spirit of the laws of nature. Their language, dignified and somewhat magisterial, has that solemnity which suits great facts. If Buffon, as it used to be said, sacrificed oftener to the graces than Montesquieu, it was always in full dress. "Buffon," said a clever woman, "renounces sometimes the spirit of his age, but never its pomps." Under the imposing style of Buffon there were always new and liberal views, some favourable, others opposed to the philosophy of his times. The comet which robbed the sun of its glory, those vitrified and incandescent planets that cooled by degrees, some sooner than others, according to their temperature, those increasing icebergs of the poles, those vast seas which flowed from east to west, those islands, the remains of submerged continents, those lofty chains of mountains, those vertebræ of the globe, were severely criticised by mathematical minds, such as D'Alembert and Condorcet. This glorious eighteenth century, that was considered the golden age of speculation, was, on the contrary, mathematical to a degree. It measured common sense, poetry even, by a mathematical scale. Buffon, in that respect, rather belonged to our age than his own, for he had preserved the imagination of science. When the chain of events was deficient in a link, he supplied it. Where nature does not say a word, he speaks for it. A poet in his way, he is never so much at his ease as in the marvellous of conception and fact. Hume somewhere expresses his surprise in reading Buffon's account of the world: this

surprise was the common feeling of all enlightened men. The eighteenth century, so to speak, witnessed the second creation of the globe.

All the opinions of Buffon are no longer considered as authority; but those upon the degeneration of animals, and upon the boundaries that climate, mountains, and seas assign to each kind, may be considered, according to Cuvier even, as veritable discoveries. We might easily cite other observations of his upon the mechanism of the universe, which are by no means obsolete; but his chief glory consists in having founded the philosophy of Nature.

For genius to foresee is to see. Thus Buffon constructed, in advance, without having the materials under his eyes, the plan of the history of the earth. Since him naturalists have collected a multitude of facts before unknown. They have gathered the remains scattered in the abysses of the earth, they have deciphered those medals of former ages in order to reveal to us, children of the earth, the chronology of the earth we tread. All this is, without doubt, immense: if science does not believe in miracles any longer, it is because it performs them: purely professional jealousy! In the midst of these prodigies we must not forget him who first lighted the torch upon the buried ruins of past worlds. We ought not, in consequence of some inevitable mistakes, to dispute Buffon's claim to having established the philosophy of the history of animals in its proper rank, among the exact and speculative

sciences. Naturalists pretend to admire Buffon as a writer: writers praise Buffon as a naturalist. This tactic is not successful. The union of thought and style is nowhere so intimately combined as in this historian, who stands alone, from whom we derive our knowledge of the works and designs of God in his visible world.

Like Pascal, who in a spirit of divination thought out for himself the science of mathematics, and was thereby a discoverer, while he was at the same time the author of the *Provincial Letters;* like that inventive geometrician who, amidst all his calculations, wrote the preliminary discourse of the *Encyclopædia,* Buffon possessed the genius of both science and writing. Though he entered late in life, at forty years, upon the study of natural history, at the same age in which his contemporary Jean-Jacques Rousseau commenced as a writer, he found time to range over the whole circle of life, and the history of the universe. A philosopher at the same time, and to the same extent, as a naturalist, a writer of the first order, he combined various excellences, any one of which would have sufficed to have immortalized him. To think — to know — to write, there is the whole man: that man was Buffon.

Of all the eulogies that Buffon and his genius inspired, here is the most beautiful, because the most simple:—

Sédaine, who could make beasts talk nearly as artlessly as La Fontaine himself, sent in their behalf the

following vote of thanks to Pajou, who was the sculptor of a bust of Buffon : —

" IN THE FOREST OF MONTBAR,
IN BEHALF OF THE BEASTS OF THE EARTH.

" Man Pajou ! we are infinitely obliged to you. We can hardly thank sufficiently the man Buffon, for having so well described us ; and you with your genius, your chisel, and the marble have restored to us our impressions and his face ; you have given us as perfect an idea of his intelligence as he has given of ours with his observation and the quill of one of our comrades.

" Do you know that he is no fool who can express the gratitude of beasts ? Such gratitude is pure. Ours is not like yours, always spoiled by vanity. When we receive a kindness we do not think we have deserved it.

" We do not make this remark for you ; you must be like the man Buffon, good and sincere. You ought to have been both of you of us : you a lion, he an eagle. Adieu."

This little chef-d'œuvre, worthy of the antique, should have been inscribed upon the pedestal of Buffon's statue.

CARDINAL DE BERNIS.

He was *Babet the flower-girl* among the literary men of his day, the *feather-footed pigeon* at court; in a word, with the rest of the world he was Joachim de Pierres, or the Abbé de Bernis. He was born at St. Marcel, near Narbonne, in the month of May, 1715. His family, which belonged to the old nobility, was related to the king through the house of Rohan, which did not keep them from being any the less poor on that account. As there was nothing for Joachim, they made him an abbé. When quite a youth he went to Paris, like Bernard, trusting to his star, smiling at every one he met, in order to get nothing but smiles in return. He was a good-looking youth, well made, had an enticing pair of eyes, an animated mouth, a heart on its guard, a soul upon his lips. Nature had made him in the image of a Hercules, neither more nor less; here the style was not the man, any more than it was with Bernard. Do not be very much astonished that this youth, so handsome and clever, became, in the eighteenth century, a minister of state, a cardinal, almost king of France, acknowledging the empire of Madame Pompadour. He could become no less.

He passed a winter at St. Sulpice; but, like Bouf-

flers, some time after him, so far from singing psalms, he took it into his head to warble about Delia and Chloe. At the end of the winter he was made vicar of a small parish in his native country. "Vicar!" said he, "I sha'n't trouble myself about so small an affair." He was soon made Abbé de Bernis, but without wishing to take a step farther. He lived in Paris, without a sou, but without a care, full of trust in his star. This star dawned for him, for the first time, in the joyous and smiling face of a pretty milliner. There were in the *rue de la Comédie*, side by side, two shops, very attractive to youths like Bernis, who were on the lookout for poetry and love; a bookshop and a milliner's shop. Bernis, who was already a lad of education, had no occasion to go into the bookshop. The milliner-girl received, not without emotion, the attentions of our sighing abbé; she was pleased with them; at the second glance she smiled; after having smiled, she sighed; Bernis wrote her an epistle in the style of the day: "Oh! cruel Chloe, what have you done to my heart?"

Our ambitious abbé did not confine himself to love-making in order to get on in the world. He courted poetry. He presented his muse to the Princess de Rohan, who was remotely his cousin. The princess, who sought distraction, attached herself to the abbé and his muse, in different ways. He was in the hotel de Rohan all he wished to be. This hotel was then the resort of men of talent and charming women; our

abbé was welcome; all the hearts and all the houses opened to receive him. Bernard and Bernis were all the rage. Voltaire, who petted youth, addressed both of them in verse, Duclos praised their wit, Helvetius had them to supper.

Bernis was welcomed by every one but the Cardinal de Fleury. He wished an abbey, as a favour to the Princess of Rohan, who was reproached for doing too much for Bernis. The Cardinal was deaf to the application. "Abbé Bernis, you have made yourself unworthy the favours of the church by your debauchery: as long as I am in office you shall not have anything." —"Very well, my lord, I will wait."

This repartee was an event; it was repeated and praised everywhere, even in the presence of the king. Each one related it in his own way; some went so far as to metamorphose the cardinal into Madame de Pompadour. According to the memoirs of the times, Madame de Pompadour said to Bernis "You are the last to whom I will grant my favours." Bernis replied, "Well, madame, I will wait." This version is the prettiest, but it is fiction; the other version is history.

It was upon the strength of this bon-mot, an *Epistle to the Graces*, his little poem the *Palace of the Hours*, and a couple of Anacreontics, that our amiable abbé presented himself for election to the Academy. The women were all in his favour; the members of the Academy unanimously elected him. He was received there, as everywhere else, as a spoiled child. "Now,"

said he to the Princess de Rohan, "I walk on firm ground."

Madame de Pompadour had been acknowledged queen of France by a royal kiss. The Princess de Rohan deigned to write to her in behalf of her dear abbé, taking care to slip into her letter a little stroke of wickedness: "Madame, you have not forgot the Abbé de Bernis; you will condescend, I hope, to do something for him: he is worthy of your favours." Apropos to this letter, Madame Pompadour wrote the following to some minister or other, I forget whom: "I forgot to ask you, my dear simpleton, what you had done for the *Abé de Berny?* Send it to me I beg,you, for I will see him on Sunday." Madame, who had a mind like Voltaire, had, like him, a manner of christening people in a way of her own; the king himself occasionally appeared in her grotesque calendar. Madame Pompadour presented her darling poet to Louis XV. with a smile. Bernis presented himself with an ode upon the *Lyric Poets.* Louis XV. was so charmed with the smile of the marchioness, that he offered Bernis at once an apartment in the Tuileries, and a pension of six thousand francs. It must be mentioned, however, that the ode on the *Lyric Poets* concluded with the following verse:—

"Sons of Horace and of Virgil,
His virtues and his justice sing,
Who to Augustus' love of art
Unites a Titus' generous heart,
A noble pattern of a king."

The abbé made such progress in the esteem of the king, and in the affection of Madame Pompadour, that after two years' residence in the palace he was made ambassador to Venice. A song of the day, which was probably by Panard, joked upon the abbé and his fair penitent.

Do not trust much to what Casanova says about the stay of Bernis at Venice, for, according to him, he had nothing to do there. But in those days ambassadors were appointed for personal reasons rather than for purposes of state. He begged of Madame Pompadour his recall. He returned and besought his beautiful protectress to allow him to remain for life a spectator of her graces. It was on his return that he wrote an epistle, become famous in society; here is the beginning:—

" 'Twas said young Cupid, Jove's own child,
Near Lignon breathed his latest sigh;
I saw him where, in woodland wild,
Mused Pompadour in times gone by;
He was alone, the boy I spied;
His torch was out: the mead, the grove,
The babbling stream, all spoke of Love."

The Abbé de Bernis was for ten years the shadow of Madame Pompadour; he followed her everywhere, sometimes even too far. Louis XV. met him at every step in the small as well as the great apartments of his palace, which made him ask, sometimes, "Where are you going, Abbé de Bernis?" The abbé bowed, smiling. One day that Madame Pompadour was

ennuiéd, and he bored mádame, she made him ambassador to Madrid. He did not want to go to Spain. "I prefer a little corner of your footstool to all the châteaux in Spain."* He was so supplicating that Madame Pompadour deigned to leave him sighing at her rose-coloured slippers. In his quality of abbé, he was in the habit of listening at the doors, saying that the palace of the Tuileries was only his great confessional. He ended by knowing everything, and by holding council with the king and the marchioness. Truly a ridiculous farce might be made out of that council: a king who was ennuiéd, an abbé who had nothing to do but to amuse himself, a woman with her couple of lovers, whose heart's only distraction was business of state. The king of Prussia came in, however, to disturb the farce. One day Frederick was pleased to say *Petticoat the Second,* instead of saying Madame the Marchioness de Pompadour; and besides he made a satire upon his reverence the Abbé de Bernis, Count of Lyons, ambassador to Madrid: *Beware of the sterile abundance of Bernis!* This was Frederick's beginning of the battle of Rosbach. In truth, perhaps, the revenge of Madame de Pompadour and the Abbé de Bernis commenced the disastrous seven years' war.

While in the ministry he was assailed on all sides by a brisk cannonade of songs and epigrams. The

* This French point cannot be given in English. *Châteaux en Espagne* is analogous to our "castles in the air."

Count de Tressan overwhelmed him with a terribly severe satire. He could not stand it any longer. The whole world got tired of him, even her ladyship who presided over the council of state; this was the finishing stroke. The Duke de Choiseul, after having succeeded him in the heart of Madame de Pompadour, succeeded him in his office. By the way of a sop, they gave him the hat of a cardinal; hence this couplet:—

"'Tis said that to his eminence
This scarlet hat was only given
To get rid of his reverence."

Besides, he was banished to Vic-sur-Aisne. Greatness always terminates in exile; he was to do penance for his earthly glory. He was to conform himself to the law of the gospel; the complaints of the people were to be appeased. His exile was of the gayest kind; he received every week the visits of the most agreeable people from Paris and his neighbourhood; the château in which he lived, and which still stands, was filled with a court in which there was nothing wanting, not even a king, not even a queen. Notwithstanding, in this pretty village, with its houses scattered along a river which flowed between two verdant mountains, he recalled his humble little muse that had been scared away by the display of his grandeur; she now sang for him some few stanzas upon the vanity of all human things, but she might well sing—there was nothing better to be done.

He was made Archbishop of Alby, but, as was usual with him, he had never made his appearance in his diocese. In truth, the faithful never complained of him; they got along marvellously without his blessing. In 1769 he repaired to Rome as ambassador to the holy conclave, assembled for the election of Clement XIV.—that priest, so gay, so amiable, and so clever, who has written that sad people are like bushes that never flourish. Pope and cardinal were on the best terms possible. Our cardinal never saw France again; he found in Rome a second country as agreeable to his old age as France had been to his youth. He inhabited a magnificent palace, where he lived in splendour. It was, for a long time, the hospitable resort of all French travellers. Every one was well received there, from the humble priest and the poor artist to princes and princesses of the blood. As he used to say himself, he kept the inn of France in a thoroughfare of Europe. Bernis had taken as his model his friend Pope Clement XIV., and to his last hour he was the most amiable of cardinals. He died in 1794, faithful to his king, cursing the French revolution, which had deprived him of half a million of revenue, and had swept away with contempt all the pretty artificial flowers of his poetry. He died in solitude and poverty, not as he had lived.

Immediately after his death, a publisher in Paris published his works, "stamped," as the preface states, "with the seal of immortality." I have related the

life of the little abbé, the ambassador, the minister of state, the cardinal. I will just skim over the works of the small poet.

For an introduction, there is his *Essay on Poetry*. "Poetry imitates the charms of paintings in its descriptions, and the tones of music in its harmony." Taking his start thence, he abandons himself to his muse, full of ardour for metaphors and sonorous rhymes. He is nearly the only one of the gentle poets of the eighteenth century who, in spite of Voltaire, had any regard for rhyme. Unfortunately for him, he consulted the rhyming dictionary oftener than that dictionary of poetry, the heart of the poet.

"A fountain and a green *plot*,
Shaded by an oak *antique*,
And a pretty little *cot*,
Where Love in dress quite *rustic*
Goes to pass every *season*
Without much rhyme or *reason*."

In his essay he is quite indignant at those poets who describe the country like Theocritus. "Their pictures of country life are without spirit; they describe nothing but the flowers of the meadow, the murmur of the streams, the tears of Aurora, and the sport of the zephyrs. Their drapery serves to conceal the Graces, and not to adorn them." In his youth Bernis lived in the country, more like a poet than a country parson; most of the poetry of his age saw nature only through Virgil's Georgics; he had the happiness to catch glimpses of it such as God had

made it, before he had seen Virgil's copy of it. Accordingly he has some touches of true pastoral poetry.

MORN.

"The amorous dove from tree to tree,
From branch to branch, is flying now.
And mingles his sweet melody
With the low murmur of the bough.

Scared by the sound of fauns that play
Upon the streamlet's quiet strand,
The naiads chaste their hair display,
Now fettered with a reedy band."

* * * *

Bernis never has the air of one in love; he is far from following his own precepts. There may be, here and there, a Chloe and a Phyllis, that bloom in his verse, but they are not loveable. The profane goddesses sing and frolic in our poet's verse; in a word, there are amours but not love. As for his verse, *reason* always rhymes with *season*, and *fire* with *lyre*.

Bernis was not equal to an elegy or to an eclogue; he could neither love nor muse. A tale of gallantry, an Anacreontic ode, an amiable epistle (little too didactic, perhaps), occasionally a pretty fancy; these were, probably, the extent of his claim upon the domain of the Muses. As a fancy, the following is tolerable:—

"The hostess is a charming creature,
And needs no song or praise of mine;
She 's Love's own bloom in every feature,
And Hebe serves her for a sign:

Bacchus swears she 's Ocean's daughter,
As he bestrides a cask in state;
Though she should give her guests but water,
She 'd all of them intoxicate."

In his first epistle on *Taste* he commences with this cry, with which all poets end:—

" E'en art, through art itself, is lost."

But, unfortunately, he ends where all other poets begin. His epistle to the Graces is quite pretty and ingenious; it is full of charming verses:—

" Love, with ever-bandaged eyes,
Sees all the faults he hides from us.

* * * *

The vintage-girl that sweetly smiles
At young Sylvain, who drunken lies,
Teaches his heart, now free from wiles,
He 'd better happy be than wise."

The little poems of Bernis are an amiable babbling, somewhat monotonous, which soothe the mind without putting it quite to sleep. Apropos to summer and autumn, the small poems of Bernis are better than the long ones of Saint-Lambert. There are some pretty pictures in *pastel,* in the taste of the day, which, after all, was not always so bad a taste. Besides, our cardinal has written a long poem in six cantos upon religion; but in it how bad a Christian, and much worse poet, he shows himself! It was hard work: there is not a ray from heaven or from the Muses; it is cold, dry, elaborate, without lustre, without tone; in a word, without faith and without poetry.

Bernis has written in prose, on poetry, on love, on poetical enthusiasm, on curiosity, upon the taste for the country. He wished to follow in the wake of La Bruyère; but in poetry, as in love, to will is not to do. He speaks of poetry like a man who is not a poet; he reasons prettily enough about love; I do not know what he says about poetical enthusiasm; and about curiosity he does not know himself what he wishes to say.

It can be said of Bernis, as of Bernard, what Ovid has said: *Sunt voces prætereaque nihil.* Their poetry is a whispering of the wind, a will-o'-the-wisp that flies from the light, the echo of a song that dies away with the pleasure of an evening bout, a little flower that hardly blooms till noon. You see that Voltaire had a reason for christening the author of those pretty nothings *Gentil-Bernard,* and *Babet the flower-girl,* the author of those artificial bouquets that bloomed far away from the sun, the heart, and from nature, perfumed with musk, and not by the breath and dews of heaven, manufactured in a boudoir, before a comfortable fire, by a man who never even looked out of his window.

VADÉ.

I.

Let us sketch with a few touches the Corneille of the market-place, that rubicund physiognomy that glows in the gallery of the fourth-rate poets, all in a bloom with a carnival laugh. Let us welcome humour, whatever may be its mask; the wicked never laugh. There has always been a refuge in France for humour; before it played comedy, it sang. Vadé cultivated it, both in the theatre and the tavern, in comic opera and the drinking-song. In the seventeenth century song dared the world with a laugh; it went humming, imprudent bee as it was, everywhere, even in the ear of Mazarin. When Molière came on the stage, humour at his will assumed all the characters of comedy. When Molière was gone, humour went limping after Regnard and Dancourt as a last resort. Among the successors of Dancourt we must not forget Vadé; he was the last expression of the humour of the streets and by-ways.

In 1747, during the gaieties of the carnival, the Countess of Château-Renaud celebrated the return of Count de Caylus, her friend, her cousin, some said her lover, by a magnificent masked ball. As Count de Caylus was fond of the society of artists and literary

men, the Countess Château-Renaud invited to the ball Duclos, Boucher, Gentil-Bernard, Vânloo, Piron, Monterif, La Tour, in a word, all those charming men of talent who roamed over society. From the beginning the fête was brilliant; one might have thought himself at court from the noise of those gilded equipages, at the sight of those rich fancy dresses, all of them from oriental lands. The mistress of the mansion was beautiful, all the women were beautiful.

About midnight, at the hour when the dance was the most lively, a disturbance all of a sudden took place at the door; the dancing ceased; the women, somewhat more inquisitive than the men, even while dancing, hurried to where the noise was. Well, this was what was to be seen. A fishwoman of a fine figure and a goodly presence, all alive, brisk, and buxom, dressed in her best, that is to say, in all the pomp of the market-woman of a hundred years ago, had passed the ante-chamber in spite of the opposition of all the footmen who pursued her. But you should have seen how she hustled them with a noisy vigour. A kick here, a blow there. But, above all, you should have heard her. Her saucy slang startled even the grave family-portraits that had been banished to the gallery, which served as an antechamber during the fête; those worthy ancestors seemed to be indignant that such language should be heard in such a place.

Notwithstanding, the Count de Caylus, sent by the Countess Château-Renaud, approached our fishwoman.

"Ah, there you are," she cries in a hoarse voice, imitating Mademoiselle Camargo in one of her comic parts; "I am glad of it, and, to give you a touch of my quality, I'll dance with you three minuets, and throw in a shuffle or so; you are to pay the scot, you understand, and never mind the expense, for it isn't often you pay the piper."—"The compliment is not so badly turned," replied Count de Caylus, thinking to himself whether he had better answer her in her own way or not; but he was afraid he might get the worst of it; so he contented himself with eyeing her as she went through her picturesque movements.—"Madame, with whom have I the honour to dance?" asked he, bowing with exquisite grace.

All the spectators applauded the contrast. "My pretty beau, you are not so jolly green, you know a thing or two. I am Mademoiselle Rabavin; I am just about to be La Tulipe's wife; but I'll make him pay for it; he has gone to the Courtille to sing and get drunk. I'll give him to morrow, the first thing in the morning, a slap in his face; it is with this hand that I write all my compliments. There is more than one of them at the Courtille like Gros-Caillou, who has got one of my scrawls upon his dog-face. You must know that we go to vespers at Porcherons, where the pretty shop-boys come with their curly ringlets and green coats to ogle us. But for me, I give my heart to La Tulipe."—"Then, madame, why do you come here, for this is called the Palace of Seduction?"—"I am

in my Sunday's best, and here I am as fine as a fiddle! I know a thing or two! Since my fine fellow, La Tulipe, is away without me, with the glass in his hand, so am I without him, with my heart in my hand! Give me, I say, a man with a sword and a coat all over lace!"

The Count de Caylus offered his hand gallantly to Mademoiselle Margot Rabavin. There was a wall of people on either side of them as they passed up. Every one admired the robust grace of the new-comer. The orchestra, that had for awhile been interrupted, renewed all its life. Count de Caylus and Margot Rabavin, after beating their hands to the music with a grace that was quite charming, commenced their minuet with great spirit, but with a great deal of gravity.

Those that were good judges of physiognomy did not remain long without recognising that, under the disguise of Margot Rabavin, there was concealed a man! But who was he? who was it that had so perfectly the careless air of the market-place and the slang of the by-streets? Conjecture was puzzled; it must be one of the frequenters of the hotel, for a stranger would not have dared to present himself in such a disguise.

"What is strange," says the Countess Château-Renaud. "I do not recognise that face at all; since Montcrif is yonder, it cannot be him."— Turning toward Carle Vanloo, who was one of the first in

France to introduce into certain select saloons the somewhat unrestrained gaiety of the studio: "Monsieur Vanloo, are you sure it is not you?"—"Indeed, madame," said the painter smiling, "I am not so sure!"

Montcrif approached the countess: "What, madame!" said he, somewhat in doubt, "don't you recognise that fellow Vadé?—Vadé! Vadé! Vadé!"

The name ran like lightning through all the apartments. Jean Vadé was then 27 years old; he was beginning to be celebrated for his poetical posies to Margot, as the Abbé de Bernis was for his to Chloris. Born at Ham (1720), but having come early to Paris, he had studied the picturesque poetry of the market-place, and was still a pupil there. He was a kind of good-for-nothing rake, but was endowed with some natural talent. An enemy to books and to teachers, he never could learn anything. He lived with his family near the markets. Like Callot, who in his youth tramped after the gipsies, like Teniers, who in returning from school used to amuse himself at the sight of the drunken sots; like Watteau, who used to remain for hours with his head out of a skylight looking at the street-dancers, or listening to the travelling quack-doctors as they talked, Vadé, the originator of a species of poetry very inferior to the works of these masters of their art, used to spend all his hours of leisure, sometimes even his hours of study, in contemplating the manners and in learning the emphatic language of the fishwomen.

In his youth he had the character of a prodigal child, we will not say of poets or of artists; for his style was far below either art or poetry. Notwithstanding his bad bringing-up and his perfect recklessness, he was taken at twenty years of age under the protection of some friends of his family, and received the appointment of comptroller at Soissons and Laon, "of which places he was the delight for four years," if we must believe a grave historian, who wrote an account of his life and posthumous works. In 1743, or rather four years later, on his return from a journey to Normandy, he returned to Paris, declaring that he did not wish to live anywhere else. As the fame of his bold fancy had spread from one to another, from café to boudoir (the gay talk of the time of the Regency was not quite obsolete), it became the fashion to receive Vadé in some of the celebrated saloons of the day. The Duke d'Agénois, who was fond of a laugh, offered to make Vadé his secretary. Vadé, who loved life, did not wait to be urged, for he was without a sou. It was arranged between the duke and the poet of the market-place, that, for a consideration of 2500 francs a year, Vadé should follow the duke everywhere; that was, moreover, all he had to do. The duke was well pleased to make the society among which he lived believe that he had something to do, since he kept a secretary. Never before were a great man and his secretary so well pleased with each other.

Such was the position that Vadé had acquired up

to the day of the masked ball of the Countess Château-Renaud.

It was the Duke d'Agénois himself who had on that day performed the duties of valet-de-chambre for his secretary. They had gone together to borrow the dress of the most coquettish fishwoman in the market. I have forgotten, perhaps, to mention that Vadé was a very good-looking fellow, though somewhat too robust. You might see that by birth he belonged to the lower classes, from his manners, and sometimes from his tastes. He might go into the best society with the Duke d'Agénois, he could never get the air of a well-bred gentleman; he retained the free manners of some of his heroes; it happened that his good nature and liveliness amused the indolent of the saloons and of society; but as for Vadé, he only amused himself in the tavern, in mad and noisy bouts, at the Café Procope, or in the crossway of the Rue de Bussy, at the old Caveau, with Piron, Panard, and Co.

When it was clear at the Countess Château-Renaud's that Mademoiselle Margot Rabavin was no other than Monsieur Jean Vadé, all the great ladies, eager for pleasure, besought the poet of the market-place to do them the pleasure of dancing with them. He was the hero of the fête. The Count de Caylus was quite a secondary personage; Vadé received all the glances, all the pretty compliments, all the sweet smiles, that were intended for the illustrious traveller. The Count de Caylus would discourse about the pyra-

mids, the obelisks, the ruins of Thebes, the source of the Nile; but on that night there was no wish to decipher the hieroglyphics of the desert, preference was given for the study of the language of fishwomen. Here was a good sample of feminine curiosity, or rather of the spirit of contradiction, which rules the world. They were to have spoken about the splendour of antiquity, with all the poetry of history! they preferred a jest.

There was at the Countess Château-Renaud's ball a young madcap, worse than all the rest, the Baroness de Beaupré, who was overwhelmed by the attractions and eloquence of Vadé; she had married, a short time before, a clown of a husband, a country gentleman of Poitiers, who wished to imprison her in the country. This prospect, so far from checking the ardour, only added to the Baroness's desire for pleasure; she wished, at least, before doing penance, to have some sins to be penitent for. No philosopher, whatever may be said, is more of a logician than a woman.

Six weeks had already passed, during which the Baroness de Beaupré waited, or rather sought, the hour that was to be fatal to the Baron—the devil's hour, as Voltaire termed it. The devil had his hour, thanks to Vadé. The Baroness de Beaupré was pursued by a crowd of admirers, who all swore they would live and die for her. Vadé did not swear as much; full of his triumph, that his heart should be

concerned was the last thing in the world he thought of. Among her adorers, the Baroness de Beaupré had deigned to take some interest in the Marquis de Montaignac, who was a man highly distinguished; he was cited as a model of gallantry now extinct. A great deal was said of the adventures he had had at court, at the theatre, and the opera. The giddy Baroness, since he deigned to implore her favours, should have by all means bestowed them with fervour; but she was highly imaginative, and had a strange taste for odd and out-of-the-way things. As soon as she saw Vadé dance a shuffle, as soon as she heard him sing some of his grotesque love-songs, she confessed to herself, rather vaguely at first, that it would be more piquant to attract the attention of Vadé than that of the Marquis de Montaignac. The heart of a woman is an abyss, in which I would not like to lose myself in trying to explain this extravagant fancy. This much is certain, that, before the ball was over, the Baroness had asked Margot Rabavin to come and see her at the hotel of her aunt, an old wicked one, who had had her day during the full bloom of the regency. If we are to believe the Baroness, her purpose was to amuse her aunt; but Vadé, who was unsophisticated, was not. however, deceived; he imagined that the Baroness was madly in love with him.

The day after, in the afternoon, he presented himself at the hotel of the old lady, Madame de Marrens. He had, by no means, the conquering look he had the

night before; it was the first time that he was about to have a gallant interview with a great lady, for hitherto he had lived carelessly from day to day with the Columbines of the stage, or the grisettes of his neighbourhood.

He had hardly given his name to the valet, who was about announcing him, when the Baroness de Beaupré presented herself, all gay and lively, in a lace mantle, a flowing, open dress, in the style of the day, and a bonnet in full feather; she said to him, "My coach is below, awaiting us; will you allow me to go on a journey with you?"—"How, madame, to the end of the world, if you will."—"I have, for a long time, wished to explore a country that you are well acquainted with."—"I am then to be carried off," thought Vadé.—"I mean the markets; the Count de Caylus said last night, that, since the Regency, French gaiety had fled thither."

While they were thus conversing, the baroness and Vadé had descended the steps of the hotel. A lacquey hurried to open the door for him:—"Follow me, my dear sir." The baroness sprang into the carriage. Vadé took his seat by her side. I will not give, word for word, what was said during their singular promenade, when, having alighted from the carriage, they went through the market-place, that labyrinth paved with good intentions, but echoing with bad words. The baroness had besought Vadé to start here and there a lively conversation with the inhabitants of the

place. "Take care, madame, I will not answer for the dirt thrown."—"In war all is fair; I am not afraid of anything to day."—"Then, madame, we will try and show you a farce." Vadé made a brilliant onset upon a herring-woman: the baroness, though all in a flutter, was quite amused. The grotesque reproaches, which flew from mouth to mouth with the noise and rapidity of the firing of a musket, did not reach her ears without startling her, somewhat the more so, as she had to suffer for being in the company of Vadé.

When they had got toward the end of their journey, Vadé said:—"We must not forget a little oyster-woman, who is worth a look for her beauty; besides, she is well able to return a compliment, for if she has her heart in her hand, it may be also said she has her wit upon her lips."

In truth, the baroness soon observed a young girl all in a ruddy glow, who was arranging in order her open oysters upon the straw. She was of a dazzling freshness and bloom. As she was always smiling, her white teeth shone as clean and white as those of a young hound. Her hair, black and glistening, braided in a thick knot, appeared below her white cap; her long eyelashes only half concealed the fire of her large eyes. Her neck, vigorously and artistically supported by her shoulders, was slightly burned by the sun; a large golden cross attached to a velvet riband hung upon her bosom, and was half hidden in the folds of a white gauze handkerchief. Her face, though not per-

fectly regular, was pretty, from its youth, its wholesomeness, and even its expression.

The Baroness de Beaupré caught a knowing glance that passed between the dealer in oysters and her guide. For the first time in her life she was jealous, particularly as she recollected what had been told her of the life of Vadé. "Well," sighed the baroness, in leaning upon the arm of her companion, "have you nothing to say to her?"—"The deuce, Nicolle," says Vadé, in trying to catch hold of her golden cross, "you have got a superb cotton short gown. Was it one of Picpus' dragoons that gave it to you?"—"My short gown," answers Nicolle, in raising herself to her full height, and putting her arms a-kimbo, "is worth, any day, that lace rag your princess has got over her eyes; may the devil fly away with me if it don't look like a calf's pluck."

Vadé, annoyed at finding Nicolle giving it to the baroness, tried to make her understand that she was not doing the honours of her kingdom very creditably. "Go away with you, begone, such folks as I am don't understand Latin. What a milk-and-water face! what has your princess got under her nose? Why, it's a fly! I'll be hanged if it isn't a fly that's got into the milk."—"Wench," cried Vadé, "hold your tongue, or I'll slit it with my sword."—"Your sword? where have you ever fleshed it? it was never wet with the blood of a Christian, I'll swear; do you keep it to defend that butterfly of the night there? Take care, or the wind will blow

her away, with her face that has got no beef in it."—"That is quite enough," said the Baroness de Beaupré, drawing away Vadé, who was getting heated with the dispute. "Be off, then," says Nicolle, "but take care he don't bite, for he is mad."

Seeing that Vadé was going off, contrary to her expectation, without saying a word more, Nicolle ran after him, saying: "You 'll not forget that I expect you to-night at the fair of St. Laurence."

She had hardly said these words, when she ran off, humming this song of Vadé's:—

"The cursed coach that by has dashed,
And both of us all over splashed;
Deuce to pay with our socks so neat,
We look like fellows of the street."

"You will not go to the fair of St. Laurence?" asked the Baroness de Beaupré, when Nicolle was out of hearing. "Perhaps," answered Vadé. That evening Vadé did not go to the fair of St. Laurence; he was more and more in earnest in his passion for the baroness. She, who had the whole day to herself, succeeded in keeping him to dinner, at the house of her aunt.

The baroness de Beaupré parted with Vadé in the evening, with the promise that he would return next day. "But, by-the-by," she asked, in a careless way, in bidding him farewell, "where does that pretty piece of insolence live, who was so complimentary to me, this morning?"—"I don't know," answered Vadé with a bow. "You don't know?" replied the baroness,

"you do, and you must tell me."—"Have you the fancy to go and expose yourself again to the jeers of Nicolle?"—"Who knows? I am curious to know where those ladies live, who reign so despotically in the market-place."—"I believe that Nicolle lives in the Rue Barre-du-Bec, over a wine-shop."

Next morning, at an early hour, the Baroness de Beaupré's coach drew up before the Hôtel de Ville. She had ordered her coachman to drive to Rue Barre-du-Bec, but it was useless, the honest fellow could not penetrate that labyrinth of narrow and crooked streets.

II.

The beautiful baroness, lifting up the train of her dress, arrived as light as a cat, without soiling her feet a great deal, at the house described by Vadé.

It was one of those old drinking-shops, where the light of the sun hardly penetrated, even at full noon: although it had the *sign of the cross*, it was guarded by a fierce shrew, who had been buffeted by all the storms of vice. "Mademoiselle Nicolle?" asked the Baroness de Beaupré, without venturing to cross the threshold. "Nicolle!" asked the woman of the shop, looking askant at the new comer, "you don't know then, my beauty, that the birds leave their nests the first thing in the morning."—"Has Mademoiselle Nicolle then already gone?"—"Wait a bit, I think I saw her just go up the stairs; however, if it pleases you,

go up; it is at the top, the last door. Take care you don't break your neck on the stairs."

Saying these words, the woman went into the shop in the rear, and returned, handing the baroness a lantern.

Though the baroness was followed by her valet, she got frightened, and thought of beating a retreat; but her curiosity emboldened her, as it does all women. Her servant took the lantern and preceded her. After an ascent by no means the safest in the world, the Baroness Beaupré arrived at the half-opened door of Nicolle. The oysterwoman, hearing some one on the outside, put out her head, quite surprised.

"Mademoiselle," said the baroness, "I have a word to say to you." Nicolle timidly courtesied.—"Come in," she said, getting out of the way to let her pass. The baroness entered, ordering her servant to remain outside. Nicolle prayed her to be seated upon a sort of stool, placed under a little diamond-shaped glass window, which she hastened to open, to let a little more light into the room. Though it was in a horrible house, this little room had a certain air of youth and gaiety about it, doubtless because it was inhabited by Nicolle. The baroness, in looking about, imagined she could hear the echo of the free lively songs of the pretty girl.

After a moment of silence, the baroness raised her eyes to the face of Nicolle, who stood before her in a timid and respectful attitude.—"Mademoiselle Nicolle, do you love Monsieur Vadé?"—Nicolle turned as red

as a cherry, which surprised the baroness very much, for she did not forget the oysterwoman of the day before. — "Come, my dear," resumed the baroness, "speak to me freely: do you love Monsieur Vadé?" —"Yes, madame."—"Very much?"—"A little."— —"Since how long?"—"Too long; for youth and time, too, is wasted by that kind of nonsense."—"My child, do you think that love is time wasted? Have you any reason to complain of Monsieur Vadé? He is a gallant, something of a fool, like all young men who allow themselves to be dazzled with a pair of bright eyes, like yours."—"Indeed, madame, I have nothing to say against him, except that he did not come yesterday to the fair of St. Laurence. But," added Nicolle, casting down her eyes, "when one goes with such fine ladies—" —"It was only in fun, you must understand."—"No, I do not understand, for I am not very learned in such things; but may the Lord take care of him!"—"Tut, tut! don't vex yourself, Monsieur Vadé will come back more in love than ever."— "Oh, I am not sorry that he goes with you; on the contrary, I wish he would come back with all the manners of those fine gentlemen, for I have always found fault with him for being nothing but a countryman of my own, with his common ways and his words just like ours. I would like it better if he had little less mind (since you say that he has so much), and more of the air of a lord."—"That is surprising," thought the Baroness Beaupré; "here is an oyster-

woman who would wish to be loved by a prince of the blood, while I, whom all the first men of the court pursue, am flattered by the homage of Vadé. Contradiction of contradictions! all is contradiction in the heart of a woman! Since it is so, I will send Mademoiselle Nicolle a lover worthy of her."

The Baroness de Beaupré had detached a small gold chain from her châtelaine.—"Here," said she to the oysterwoman, "keep this in remembrance of me."—"My good madame, how good you are, and to me, too, who had not the courage to ask your pardon for having insulted you so grossly yesterday!"

Nicolle attempted to kiss the hand of the baroness, but the latter kissed affectionately the blooming cheeks of the young fishwoman.

In the evening the Baroness de Beaupré met the Marquis de Montaignac, at the opera.—"You do not know, marquis," said she to him, in order to rid herself of his importunities, "what a beautiful girl I saw yesterday, who would be delighted to sacrifice her heart to you; all she is looking for, is a prince of the blood. Do you wish me to point out the way by which you may find her?"—"Was she at the Countess Château-Renaud's ball?"—"No. Go to-morrow and breakfast in the Rue Montorgueil; ask for some of Mademoiselle Nicolle's oysters; soon you will see a beauty, in a white cap and cotton short-gown, worthy of Rubens, or rather of Murillo."—"You excite my curiosity, baroness; but how can I take any

interest in a face, however charming it may be, when I have before my eyes, even in your absence, your beautiful one, that neither Rubens nor Murillo could copy, so divine and full of sensibility is it?"

This did not prevent the Marquis de Montaignac from going to breakfast, with a friend, at a tavern in the Rue Montorgueil. Nicolle was there, and charmed him. She did her best to avoid it, but was obliged to eat her oysters with the marquis, and drink the Rhine wine in spite of herself. Toward the end of the breakfast, Nicolle observed with admiration that Monsieur de Montaignac was always a marquis, although he conducted himself in a somewhat freer way than Vadé himself. She allowed herself to be influenced, little by little, to such a degree, that when he spoke of carrying her off she threw herself into his arms, all blushing and happy!

The marquis left his companion under the table and went off with Nicolle in his coach, singing like a gay dragoon. The oysterwoman was ravished with delight; she never wearied listening and looking at the marquis. "But," said she, with some embarrassment, "what will you do with me by-and-by?"—"I will love you." "But afterward?"—"I have a little cottage at Montparnasse, a charming retreat, in the middle of a garden, a veritable terrestrial paradise. There you will be beautiful; you will pass the time in loving and awaiting me. If that should weary you, you can become an actress.

Nicolle expressed all her joy in a smile of happiness.

"But," replied she, "shall I ever have the courage?" —"Why not? when a girl has got a pretty face, she is more than half an actress."—"At the little theatres of the Fairs, perhaps, but at the *Comédie*, where my godmother took me last Easter, never."—"Don't trouble yourself in advance, you are not going to make your débût to-morrow."—"Unless," continued Nicolle, following his idea, "I should play Marinette with her Gros-René."—"You are right; you would make a capital servant in Molière's play."

Madame Nicolle Delarue made her *débût* at the *Comédie Française*, in 1748, as a little article of Jean Fréron tells us. The report spread on all sides that she had been an oysterwoman. It was at first supposed that this contrast would be a cause of success; it was quite otherwise. Actresses should be surrounded, in order to preserve the illusion of the theatre, by a kind of poetical and mysterious atmosphere, that I cannot very well describe. If Iphigenia, who is to be offered up as a beautifully pale and pure sacrifice, should have been caught the night before over the fire making the pot boil, all the effect of the scene would be lost, unless the talent of the actress should be great enough to abstract us perfectly and elevate us to her high conception, as it were, by magic.

Nicolle Delarue, who was so much at her ease in the market-place, did not seem upon the stage either natural or graceful, always pretty, however, but without talent. She was, nevertheless, applauded immensely

during her first appearance: but this triumph did not last long; after a short time she retired from the stage, having been ill-treated by the other actresses, who forgave her her want of talent, but never forgave her her pretty face.

Vadé, who was present at her triumphant début, in the Baroness de Beaupré's box, was faithful to her at least after her fall. After an ill-assorted union, which lasted for more than a year, each one was delighted, the marquis as well as the baroness, the poet of the market-place as well as the oysterwoman, to find themselves as they were before. Only Nicolle on leaving the stage never went back to the Rue Barre-du-Bec, to resume her white cap and her cotton short gown; she married Jean Vadé, with great form and ceremony, in the church of St. Germain-des-Prés.

We do not wish to trace any further the romance of the Baroness de Beaupré; we believe that she did not harbour any bitterness against the Marquis de Montaignac. We have given this little piece of history, though somewhat spiced with gallantry, not only to bring Vadé on the stage, but to show once more how the human heart ever seeks the unknown and delights in contrasts.

Vadé never forgot the baroness; he always preserved as a delightful memento an inkstand, with some gold pens, that she sent him with her farewell letter. Read how Vadé turned off some lines of gallantry on the occasion! It will be seen that he fell into the style

of the perfumed madrigal of the little abbés of his day:—

"So much each pen from you I prize,
That e'en the god with bandaged eyes
In vain would offer to exchange,
Against the best that he could bring;
I still should lose, how wide the range,
E'en could I pluck from his own wing."

The Duke d'Agénois continued to protect Vadé; it was with regret that he parted with his cheerful secretary; he solicited and obtained for him another office of controller; but this time Vadé was able to live in Paris. His wife presented him, during the early years of their marriage, with half a dozen fine rosy, chubby children, who enlivened very much the humble dwelling of the poet. Until then Vadé had only written drinking-songs. Piron and Panard had often advised him to try his hand at operas for the theatre of the fair of St. Laurence. While sowing his wild oats he was a constant attendant at that theatre: he followed the advice of his two predecessors. From 1752 to 1757 he wrote no less than eighteen comic operas, some for the theatre of the fair of St. Laurence, others for the theatre of the fair of St. Germain.

Vadé died in 1757, during the feast of the Pentecost, leaving behind him poor Nicolle Delarue, and three or four children hardly out of the cradle yet. He was only thirty-seven years old; he was said to have died of his sins. Grimm, in his letters, very

disdainfully delivered the following funeral oration:—"His death was the result of an ill-regulated life. I could never succeed in finding out Monsieur Vadé's talent; he knew very well the slang of the market-place, but he never used it with any skill." I have been unable to find any traces of his family in the papers of his day. I do not know whether Nicolle survived him a long time. She had been unable herself to succeed on the stage; we can conceive that the hope of all her life was accomplished, when we find Mademoiselle Vadé making her débût at the *Comédie-Française*. Grimm speaks of her débût thus:—"Mademoiselle Vadé, the daughter of the poet of that name, is not so pretty as Mademoiselle Contat; but she has a pleasing style of face, and, in spite of her bad accent, has a voice that interests, a delicate and elegant figure; she has been a pupil of Mademoiselle Dumesnil. You might suppose her possessed of a lively sensibility, but she wants dignity and taste. The style of her features, and that of her acting, recall too often the kind of poetry that her father had the glory of excelling in."

Vadé himself made his débût at the theatre with a parody on *Omphale*, which was very popular. Among his pieces have been mentioned the following: *The Impromptu du Cœur, la Veuve indécise, le Poirier, Nicaise, les Racoleurs, le Trompeur trompé, les Troyennes de Champagne*. Doubtless, as our fathers understood humour, all those little operas must

had on the stage a good deal of hearty natural fun. I acknowledge, however, that in reading these obsolete productions, I can find neither talent nor humour. Of art, also, there is not a trace. Vadé was neither a poet nor a literary man, a mere manufacturer of songs of no merit, a feeble echo of Panard.

The Abbé de Voisenon has very humorously retracted his share in the praise that was bestowed upon Vadé:—"He is wrongly called the founder of the *poissard* style. He was stimulated to a noble emulation in reading the *Etrennes de la Saint-Jean*, the *Œufs de Pâques*, the *Ecosseuses*, the *Bals de Bois*, and the *Fêtes roulantes*. The chief authors of these works were the Chevalier d'Orléans, grand prior, the Count de Caylus, Moncrif, and the younger Crébillon:—

"Among so many heroes, I dare not name myself."

This amiable circle that Madame du Deffand called the tail of the Regency, was composed of twelve men of rank, or literary persons, who had resolved to sup well and to be clever—between their second and third bottles.—They supped sometimes at Mademoiselle Quinault's, sometimes at Count de Caylus'. Each one paid his scot by the composition of a burlesque history, which next morning was sent to the printer, and soon to the bookseller. The collection sold well enough to allow Mademoiselle Quinault and Count Caylus, the responsible editors, to employ the best cooks in Paris! It is from this quarter that have issued so many

monumental works, such as the *Battle of the Dogs*, the *Ballet of the Turkeys*, the *Sheep's Tail*. Vadé, says the Abbé de Voisenon, could never equal these distinguished productions. The grand prior, author of the *Battle of the Dogs*, and of the *Ballet of the Turkeys*, was christened, with a better right than Vadé, the Corneille of the market-place; but "if Vadé had not the honour of first inventing this style of writing, it is at any rate certain that it died with him, and we say, Amen."

There are among the works of Vadé a whole volume of songs, of tales, and fables; the tales are licentious, without fancy or talent; the fables have neither simplicity, interest, nor descriptive power. Of the songs, the *amphigouris*—the nonsense verses—are odd, and not without some little humour. It can be seen from the very beginning of the suppers at the Caveau, that Piron, who was the leader of the jovial company, desired to re-establish the sonorous rhyme of the poets of the sixteenth century. People amused themselves, as they used to, fifteen years ago, with childish verse. Here is a specimen in this *amphigouri* of Vadé:—

AMPHIGOURI.

(Nonsense Verses.)

Josaphat
Is a flat,
A soft one,
Who thinks he's a wise one;
For he goes alone
To the torrid zone,

[illegible]sing;
Victimizing
Agrippine,
For having read at Prau
The works of Pro-
Serpine.
If the public will forget
All the harm he's done as yet,
If it's so,
Then Dido
Has, just like us,
The right to go to the park
That's intended for Mark
Aurelius.

The chief want in the songs of Vadé is variety, for they contain nothing but that everlasting burden of the French song, *the delights of Bacchus and Love*. The Greeks also sang the same tune; but instead of singing in a tavern like our French song-writers, they sang in a palace, at a banquet, where the gods themselves might not have been ashamed to sit; instead of Anacreon and Paniasis, the French had, a hundred years ago, their Panard and Vadé.

As song-writer, writer of farces, tales, and fables, Vadé lives no longer, and, in fact, never has lived. But since his name recalls to mind a burlesque style of writing still somewhat in vogue, let us see if the poet of the markets deserves a place in the history of literature. Jan Steen, Van Ostade, Brauwer, and Teniers, have represented with skill and truthfulness the low life of the Flemish people. How is it that

their paintings have such a charm while the descriptions of Vadé are entirely without interest.

It is because painting, by means of colour, and the pictorial heightening for effect, always keeps itself up to the standard of art whatever may be its subject, while poetry loses its character and its magic power when it loses its self-respect. Painting can only seduce through the eyes; poetry strikes the soul at once: well, what one of us is there, whose soul would be impressed by the famous work of Jean Vadé, *the Broken Pipe, an epic-tragic-poissardi-heroic-comic poem,* of which it is impossible to quote four lines without offending the ear?

There is one day, however, in the year when Vadé is a national poet—a sad day for French genius—Shrove Tuesday, Mardi Gras. Yes! Vadé has sketched with a bold hand the characteristics of that coarse muse who, with her arms akimbo, her eyes on fire, her neck bare, throws at the excited crowd, from the top of her masquerade car, her drunken and insolent jests.

END OF VOL. II.

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